

MONTENEGRO



TOP BIKING TRAIL 1
SALTY AND SWEET

IMPRESSUM

The data given in this guide are the result of a careful research. Considering that the conditions regarding the trail markings, trails and signalisation are constantly changing, we cannot guarantee the accuracy of the data and this guide is to be used on one's own responsibility. In case you are not confident in your orientation abilities in the mountains, please contact an experienced guide for assistance.

With gratitude we accept all comments, remarks and suggestions which you can send to the publisher to the e-mail address office@bjelasica-komovi.co.me. To the same address you can also e-mail your stories and experiences from your travel along the TT1 Route – we will be glad to post them at the website www.tt1.bjelasica-komovi.me.

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ELEVATION PROFILE



SIGNPOSTING



ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS

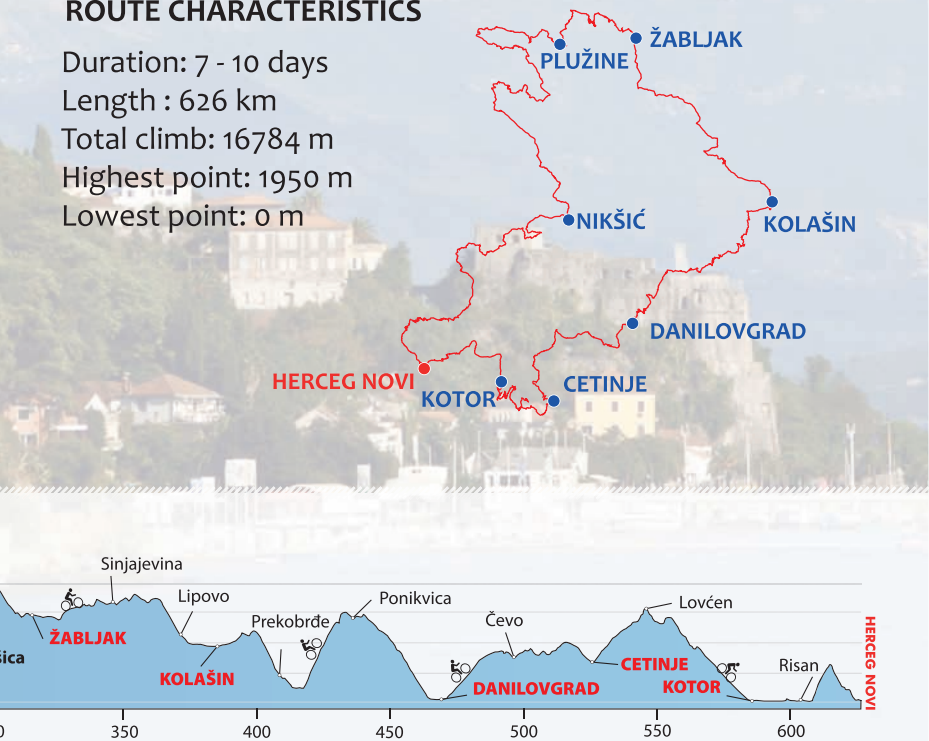
Duration: 7 - 10 days

Length : 626 km

Total climb: 16784 m

Highest point: 1950 m

Lowest point: 0 m





Top Biking Trail 1

Salty and Sweet

From Herceg Novi to the Austro-Hungarian Machu Picchu, through a labyrinth of paths along which the aristocrats of Europe strutted around, and along the old caravan roads to the secret vantage points above the canyons which do not expect us, tickling the heights on the epic ascents and falling into the depths along the endless downhill sections, rushing for the underground rivers and running away from the lake devils, wandering from the highest town in the Balkans to the highest mausoleum in the world, from the Montenegrin Tibet to the Montenegrin Atlantis, searching on behalf of Sherlock Holmes for the M letter hidden within 25 crazy serpentines which collapse into the southernmost fjord of Europe, and all that while eating meat dried on the whirlwind of air streams from the mountains and sea, and tasting, without end

or measure, the greenery, sky and blueness – on this route we will touch an authentic Montenegro, and get to know better its essence and soul.

Completing the TT1 Route (as well as the other Top Trail Routes) is not easy. But in order to make it one needs a good, but not top fitness – far more important will be a positive approach, determination and good planning, so that we always have sufficient time for harder sections. Besides, the areas through which we will pass won't stop thrilling and inspiring us and the ultimate reward – the poetry of travelling along the exotic areas and the luck to see some of the loveliest places in Montenegro - will be incomparably greater than the amount of sweat involved. Every genuine nature lover knows that this is a great bargain.

Before you set off it's good to know:

Basic information regarding the route:

- the length: 626km
- the duration: 7-10 days
- the highest point : 1950masl (the Stuoc pass on Durmitor)
- the lowest point : -3m? (As low as we dive while enjoying the water of the Adriatic on a beach.)

The route can be made with the weight on the bike (camping equipment and so on), but because of certain harder sections we recommend you to keep the weight as light as possible – with good planning one can always spend the night under the roof and also the supplies of food and water do not have to be larger than the half-day. Water available on all springs along the route is good for drinking.

Because of the remoteness of many sections it is recommended to ride in a group, and as a minimum of equipment one should always have a map and a compass (or much better, a GPS device), mobile telephone, a torch, basic tools for bike and a spare tyre.

The Top Trail 1 Route is fully marked with signposts, but we strongly recommend you to download the GPS data (track logs and waypoints), which will further

make navigation on the route easier and safer, from the website www.tt1.bjelasica-komovi.me.

On the mountain and forest roads, the distance between the junctions is sometimes only a few tens of metres, and in such cases on the route which is more than 600km long it is impossible to give the distance from the start precisely enough: if we only cut the bends in a different way, our speedometer at the end may show several kilometres of difference in relation to the values given in this text. Therefore those values should be taken as guidance only, and for an accurate and easy navigation on the route the best solution is the offered GPS track log.

Safety: if the weather is fine, if we feel well and we know where we are, we are safe on this route. One should not worry about wild animals, and people whom we will meet will be more than kind and willing to help. In katuns (the shepherd's summer settlements) and villages we can count on an endless hospitality as well. On the tour we will also pass some sections (Herceg Novi, Boka Kotorska Bay) on which the traffic might be heavy (particularly in the tourist season), so one should ride carefully.

Let's go then – we have a long journey ahead of us!



1 HERCEG NOVI - ORJEN

Through the winding streets of Herceg Novi we will head towards the main road to Trebinje.

(The mileage will be calculated starting from a large roundabout at which we cross the Adriatic Main Road.)

There we are at the start of an „epic“ ascent, one of the greatest on the Top Trail Routes: in the next 28km we will ascend from the sea level to 1600m above sea level, on the Orjen Mountain: a hard work, and it is best not to think much about kilometres and elevations: along the way there will be many great sights, and they should be our only landmarks on the journey. From one beauty to another, with a lot of patience and pauses, we will reach even that mountain pass that now might seem to us incredibly far away. Starting early in the morning will of course help to avoid the sea heat as well as the anxiety because of the night which in this special day will run rapidly towards us.

A great new and wide road leads us from the junction uphill, in the direction of Trebinje. The ascent is steeper in the first section (around 9%), and later it is mainly moderate – there will be even some flat sections we won't have anything against, of course! The traffic is not too heavy.

At the end of the 4th kilometre we will turn right, onto the asphalt side road. The section ahead of us is not long (after a few kilometres we will return again onto the main road towards Trebinje), but it is picturesque: we ride along the cliff of the Silobod Hill, ascending above the main road and, of course, immersing into beautiful vistas.

At the beginning of the 13th kilometre again - this time definitely as well – we abandon the main road to-

wards Trebinje and turn right, onto the narrower, older and solid asphalt road. It gently climbs towards a rather large village of Krusevice, set in the middle of a cheerful and brave valley which seems to mock a little bit the surrounding grim rocks, crowned on the right side with the summit of Subra (1679m).

In the middle of a green leaf on which the houses are sparkling, by the village graveyard (15.4km), we turn right, towards the main part of the village. After Krusevice, the road is considerably narrower and the harder section of the ascent starts. We climb up the giant steep slope of Osoja as an ant up someone's coat, and there will be sweat - and a lot of inspiration as well, whenever we turn around to look how below us, along the crazy serpentines in the Himalayan style, a dark snake of the asphalt road winds. After all, down below and towards the south the „keyhole“ of the valley stretches: that magical mechanism, the seesaw “you are here – you are not here” which every known valley in the world must have, otherwise no one would ever enter it. We have used this keyhole to sneak into the sleeping world below the summit of Subra, and when we let our eye wander along it far away, it will also happily bathe in the blueness of the sea. When, at the beginning of the 19th kilometre, we finish the most difficult section of the ascent from the village, it's worth making a slightly longer pause and enjoying all this – we have deserved it.

Upwards, onto the next step and into the next valley... We enter the pleasant hamlet of Krnji do, and after it, along a flat road, we ride through a wonderful forest. At the beginning of the 21th kilometre we reach the little village of Vrbanje, that is to say its hamlet called Zdrjelo. There is a junction at which we will turn right (to the left an old macadam road towards Trebinje branches off), onto a good macadam road which meekly leads us past the local

pub, inns and weekend houses.

The valley is gentle and green here, covered with grass and low conifers. The gentleness of the area around us is emphasised by the craggy cone of the Ljeseva glava peak which rises on the left, and ahead the other peaks of the Orjen Mountain loom above us. We have to tackle them, to ascend below their crests and then, in the last moment, to trick them, rushing away below them, over a precious mountain pass. Everyone who has ever tackled serious mountain ascents knows the jitters which can crawl out of somewhere on the road, under the wheels of a bike, then crawl up to the throat and scratch it somewhere there, while we watch the distant and frowned, high world above us. Will there really be a road up there, will it really somewhere and somehow break through that seemingly insurmountable wall which swoops down on us? Or will it get scared and disappear, leaving us in the jaws of the mountain, in the storm of verticals in which there has never been or could be any mountain pass? But everyone who has ever tackled serious mountain ascents also knows that the best medicine against such jitters is to simply set off, and the best way to prevent the betrayal of the road and magical mountain passes is a strong faith that those are somewhere there ahead of us – that way we tie them to our fate of a traveller, and thus make them actually be there.

After leaving the valley we start the first, and not too steep leg of the final ascent to the Orjen Mountain and the macadam road is slightly poorer (even, but slightly less rolled). But when we stay alone with it, it will slowly show its real nature and character of a typical Austro-Hungarian road, which all are beautiful, yet a little bit moody. From the beginning of the 24th kilometre, near the place called Slom (the Break Down) (probably not without reason)), the road surface

becomes even poorer, although it is still acceptable, but soon after that a spooky section starts, on which the serpentines painfully crawl up the huge steep slope below the summit of Mali Kabao, killed by avalanches and fires. Silent, dead trunks of burnt down conifers, meadows vanished under the bites of raging crags, dry wounds of plucked landscape. Once upon a time glaciers, and in our time violent blows of snow during the winter, and rage of fire in the summer – as if this vilayet is an eternal pasture of destruction, which always comes, but only in different ways.

Well, through such a harsh area our road runs, parched and equally harsh – what other kind could it be when it has to disguise as a mere scar of the rock in order to pass this way? Thirsty stones try hard to bite the wheels of the bike which violently jump over it, one would say that the entire Montenegro is staggering with us. The Montenegro of the past centuries: a piece of hard existence pasted above a capricious sea, the battlefield of a constant and capricious fight for life, for silent survival on the barren stone which water leaves as soon as it touches it, running away through the secret channels into the lowlands for which it craves. For anyone who travels on the bike in order to meet other regions and people, this is one of those precious places in which that goal is really reached, in which with a good step one approaches the genuine understanding of a country. Hotels, swimming pools and restaurants are a different world, a different kind of pleasure and from here we will better understand soul of the highlanders whom we will meet on the long journey along the heights of Montenegro. We won't be surprised at the deeply wrinkled faces, sinewy hands and necks, strong intertwining of veins underneath the thin, dry skin, and piercing, shiny eyes, deeply set below the strong bridges of the temples: it is only that on

their living children, on human bodies, the rocks like these reflect and multiply.

At the very end of the 26th kilometre, on the right side and low above the road, there is an Austrian commemorative plaque from the beginning of the last century. A little further ahead, from the elbow bend at the end of the section called Begova muljika, one must push hard at the last challenge: around a kilometre and a half long ascent which leads us under the summit of the Orjen Mountain (Zubacki kabao, 1894m), on the left above us. Sometimes even until the beginning of June, from Begova Muljika one may proceed only on foot and over the snowdrifts – therefore, one should previously obtain information down in the village about the conditions up here and on avalanche danger.

Finally, there we are on Sedlo (the Saddle) (1596m), the mountain pass near a mountain hut and a mere. Those who like standing with both feet on the ground will probably say – the puddle, but regardless of its size, it is a little miracle on the waterless Orjen.

Orjen is a drunk: although it has the largest quantity of precipitation in Europe, except the snows during the winter, it drinks everything else straight away. Water “slips through its hands”, that is to say through the porous karst soil it swiftly flows down into the depths of the mountain, and from there into the lower areas, all the way to the Bay of Boka Kotorska.

For some people it will take a half a day to come here from Herceg Novi, and for some an overnight stay as well, but everyone will reach this high throne with the pockets full of impressions, and in addition to that, just at the right time to enjoy deserved hanging out with the clouds. Be it an evening or a morning, in a clear weather, from here the arrow of the look may be fired far away. And even when fog or rain

lies down on the saddle, a presentiment of the two sides of the world which stream from the valleys on both sides and join together in the shaded darkness, will be enough for everyone who wish to play with one's boiling thoughts, emotions and adrenaline, to sculpt one's sea, land and views, which will be as impressive as the real ones.

Of course, the saddle is also a good place for those who love spicing the biking tours with a little bit of nice mountain climbing. Zubacki kabao Summit is some three hundred metres above us, about an hour and a quarter walk away. A few hundred metres to the southwest from the mountain hut, there is Studenac, a capped well.

2 ORJEN - GRAHOVO - NIKŠIĆ

From Sedlo we have a long descent down the wooded north-eastern side of Orjen ahead of us, again along the former military road. A ride along the old Austrian roads in Montenegro is a ride through the ancient times, and this road is a typical representative of that time travel. In spring, after the melting of snows, there will be a lot of branches and also some trunks on it, which one should pass over, but in the rest of a year it is mostly good, and only occasionally somewhat poorer. Random intertwining of roots and rocks which are in a constant attack is still strongly opposed by stability and strictness of strong retaining walls, in which the Austrian philosophy has been conserved. Short gorges as the traces of a violent fight with a harsh stone, in the places in which the stubbornness of the constructors has won. And there where the stone has won, they have wisely bended the road into serpentines. Forest shadows will be welcome on a warm day to hide us from the sun, and the downhill section just like

the downhill section – it is always a „jewellery“ which will make every rolling more attractive. That way we will soon reach Jelovi do (8km from Sedlo), and along the way, on the left, a view of Reovacka greda, one of the most beautiful areas of the Orjen massif, will open up for us.

In the northern end of Jelov do, a sharp cone of the Straznik peak rises, on which there is a fortress – the eagle's nest. Built at the end of the 18th century by Austrians, as a furthestmost strategic point towards the Montenegro of that time, it guarded, along with other similar constructions on the line from the Orjen Mountain towards the Bay of Boka Kotorska, border with the Ottoman Empire. At that time there were, they say, around 70 such fortifications. On the fortress there also was a meteorological station in which the first hydro-meteorological measurements were conducted – why it is important, we will see slightly later.

After a short ascent from the dale, through a beech forest and below the big cliffs which loom above a narrow white





band of the road, we reach the village of Crkvice (10km from Sedlo, 1090 masl.).

Crkvice is a unique, magical place, which lasts less and evaporates more. Close to the border with Herzegovina, halfway between Risan and Grahovo, tiny, surrounded with forest and green jungle on a piece of the gentle patch in the valley, it lives a lonely life and is nearly deserted – one would say that it is closer to returning to the wilderness than matching the people's needs. A hundred years ago in this area called Krivosije there were more inhabitants than in Nikšić or Podgorica, and today scarcely some fifty elderly households still live there.

And magic? The magic is in an amazing contrast between that what we see and that what we need to imagine. It is hard to believe that bushes and rambles hide the town from the end of the 19th and the beginning of the 20th century, which was a well-known, important and developed spot of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. For here, there was a large Austrian army barracks with stables and flats for officers and their families, the place could accommodate 6 to 7 thousand people, there were a church, hospital, prison, water

tanks, radio and telegraph station, post office, some fifteen shops (a story says that in Crkvice one could buy everything all the same as in Vienna, except maybe the ball gowns), school, hotel, tennis court and football pitch (with boxes and stands for a thousand spectators), ski trail, bowling alley, three brothels and a cemetery in which the Austrians, the Hungarians, the Czechs, the Slovaks... rest. The place also had its own electricity supply. (After the fall of the Empire the electricity came in this area again in 1969. Only the manner of supplying with water has remained at the Austrian time level: namely, there is no water supply, so locals even today collect rainwater.)

The road will also bring us before a huge, dilapidated stone construction, to which, however, the ravages of time and human neglect still have not taken away its dignity. Although to us it might resemble a palace from that time, its purpose was different: this is a barrack's bakery from 1907. The largest in the Balkans, second largest in Europe, with an automated production, it produced up to 24 tons of bread a day. And on the second floor there was a cinema. Yes, right here, in this, today remote, place.



And one should not leave this town of ghosts before strolling along it thoroughly. Besides bakery, one can also see or perceive the remnants of the officers' building, the hotel (we will recognise it by its memorial plaque on which the year of its construction - 1897, is engraved) and the foundations of other buildings. Adjacent huge mounds hide water tanks (rainwater tanks). Their mighty stone walls, some tens of metres long vertical slabs, and on the upper sides thick boards, some of which are as spacious as a basketball courts, resemble the Aztec ruins – wild vegetation which swallows them will surely intensify that impression. From here the military roads have led far and wide, and we can still see their sections. Actually, not only see, but stroll along them as well – after all, along one of such roads we have arrived here.

After the glorious days, long gone, Crkvice has preserved only one luxury: its own monsoon. The place is, namely, the European record holder, and the tenth in the world, in terms of the quantity of precipitation in the populated areas. An annual average from 1961 to 1990 was 4631 mm/m², and the record registered in 1937 was so much as 8036 mm/m². When the rains start, it might be raining non-stop even for a couple of weeks, but a major part

of the precipitation comes during the autumn, winter and spring, and therefore in the summer months we have good chances to pass this way and stay dry. Moreover, during August forest fires are not rare. And for the irony to be complete, due to a karst terrain which greedily drinks up all water, in this area there is no spring.

The macadam road, which in the last few kilometres has been of a good quality, gives way to an asphalt road by the bakery. We will continue straight ahead.

In this place another narrow asphalt road, along which via Grab one can descend to Herceg Novi, branches off to the right. In the first part of that road there is a macadam section, and near its end an unforgettable view of the valley of the village of Ubli and the Bay of Herceg Novi appears before us. (After that a little cold shower follows – going past the town landfill, at which an asphalt road starts again.) All in all, a great local circuit can be made this way, if our base is Herceg Novi and we do not have ambitions to wander further ahead along the TT1 Route. About 500m after the bakery, another road branches off to the right – that one leads towards Risan.

At the beginning of the descent from Crkvice (1.1km from the bakery), one mountain signpost points to the right, to a trail which leads to the nearby summit of Kom, crowned with another fortress. If we have not visited the fortress on Straznik, we definitely should not miss this one, since it is only some ten minute walk away – a small price to pay for an exquisite view from above.

The first section of the descent is gentler and it leads through a wonderful beech forest. The second section is steeper, so we will rapidly ride 7.5km from Crkvice to the place called Han (660masl) in Dragaljsko polje. From Sedlo mountain pass on Orjen to this point we have had slightly less than 18km of an almost constant descent.

There we will get onto a deserted old road from Grahovo towards Risan, and turn left, towards Grahovo. At the junction, there is a dilapidated stone building which fades away rapidly - a few more winters and in some spring it will also melt down along with the snows. And only some ten years ago, while this was the main road, it merrily winked at every passer-by. Could then anyone of those inside it - the owner, waiters, guests who at the tables dream about the sea or say their farewells to it, and an occasional traveller startled by thunders which rumble here as if the world is collapsing – could anyone imagine that so soon the walls around them will be left without the roof, and windows without window panes which would remember their reflections and presence in that place?

About 2.5km further, there's a cause for dying of this pub: we join a broad new road which from Niksic via Grahovo leads to Risan. The traffic is not too heavy, and the asphalt road ascends gently, so we will soon reach a slightly more than 5km away Grahovo (705masl).

Near Grahovo, about 800m before the centre of that place, we will abandon the new road and turn left, towards the centre.

Before we continue our journey towards Niksic, in the centre of Grahovo, we may turn left, and then along a narrow asphalt road go to around 4.5km away Grahovsko jezero (the Grahovo Lake).

From Grahovo we head towards Niksic using the old road. The ascent becomes steeper, but in return we will have a wonderful view over Grahovsko polje (the Grahovo Field) - one should look back. After less than 4km we will join the main road again, and continue along it for another 3.6km, to the place in which we will turn right, onto the side road. We will continue our journey towards Niksic that way, via Zagorski Do and a scattered village of Jabuka. At the junction (1008masl) there is a little pub with tables in front of it, a great place to wait for slower travel companions or to watch who else passes this way (this place serves for that, so one should not let down its essence).

In the next 15km we will pass through a remote, waterless area (one should fill the water bottles), in which we will constantly go up or down, so the ride will be rather strenuous. We start a 6km long descent along a lovely and interesting road via Zagorski Do (one of those windings which stay in memory), all the way to a junction (5.4km from the main road) at which we have to turn right. (Straight ahead via Podbozur one returns to the main road). Immediately after the end of the descent (912masl), a 3.5km long ascent to a mountain pass at the Crvena kita bauxite mine (1070masl, 9.6km from the main road) starts, and that would be the most difficult section on this leg, since further ahead we will mostly descend (with a few steeper ascents and a number

of the short ones).

Near the mountain pass the asphalt road gives way to a good macadam road which will take us from the dale to dale, via the hamlets of the village of Jabuka called Razmuce (several houses on the right, below the road, 12km from the main road) and Krstace (less than a kilometre further, an old school on the right from the road). The dales are all stunning, but the rest of the ride through a uniform greenery which closes the view (predominantly a low forest) is likely to be a little bit monotonous. The beginning of the 19th kilometre brings us a steep descent towards the Golubinje hamlet, and from there it is not far to the beginning of the asphalt road and a short uphill section which will bring us again onto the Niksic - Grahovo - Risan main road (22km).

If we have used the peace and a slow pace in the hills of this section for contemplation, we might have come a little bit closer to enlightenment. To Niksic we certainly have.

Due to a blind bend we will cautiously join the main road, and turn right. After we go past Trubjela and the local restaurant (on the right side), we cross a gentle pass after which the road descends towards Niksicka dolina (the Valley of Niksic). Slightly more than 5km after joining the main road, on the Pandurica hill we will turn right, onto a good macadam road which will take us to a new little adventure: a tour around Slano jezero (the Salt Lake).

We ride through an area on the southern side of the lake, but we will have to await a view for a while since the landscape is similar to that through which we have been passing somewhat earlier: rolling wooded hills through which our road runs panting heavily. And after slightly more than a kilometre it decides to pass straight through the yard of a lonely but rather large household with three brick houses – on our

way out of there, in front of us the „gate of the empire“ will get in the way, a wooden fence which we will have to move in order to proceed further - but not before we neatly put the fence back in its place.

The household is located on the bottom of the dale, therefore in the next kilometre we ascend from there. A few hundred metres from the gate the road becomes poorer and overgrown with grass. Bumpy, with rocks which peek out of the road surface and after the rain, occasionally with the mud as well – but, all in all, within the bounds of „decency“. At 3.4km from Pandurica and branching off the main road (2.1km from the household), we will reach a forest junction, at which we will turn left, and leave the overgrown section behind. A few hundred metres further ahead we pass between two lonely stone houses, the macadam road is solid again, and finally it decisively leads us downhill, towards the lake. At the steepest sections of the descent the road surface is rocky.

At the beginning of the 6th km from the main road (5km from the household) the asphalt road starts, so we will soon reach the little village of Orline (630masl) and the shore of a big blue eye which on a sunny day winks at us in a friendly way.

Slano jezero (the Salt Lake) is an artificial lake, formed in 1950 for the needs of the Perucica Hydroelectric Power Plant and it has a surface area of almost 9 square kilometres. Nevertheless, it would be a sin to end its description with these scant words. It is a sea in miniature, a model of water distances and perspectives, and even more than that – it is, by some miracle, still unknown ocean, a treasure which those who rush along the main road above it only glimpse, while only those who roam along its shores truly know and enjoy it. Bays, straits, islands, deltas of mighty rivers: everything is

present there, just reduced to such a happy measure that it can fit under the eyebrows and in a thought of a man. Instead of the endless open sea and a blinding splendor of the emptiness, here the shores on the opposite side, the greeneries of other continents, are visible. Everyone can be Columbus or Magellan in here, and that is a reason for an irresistible allure of the lake.

To sail down the exciting arms to the hidden ports, to tour a half of this world in a search for our own spices, ivory and gold, we can make on the bike too - one should only turn the pedals again. We will turn left, to the west, in order to ride a clockwise tour around lake (One can also go right, but the eastern side is slightly less interesting - there is a long concrete embankment which closes the lake).

On the side to which we head the asphalt road ends straight away, but it is replaced with a great macadam road. Below an interesting tower on the left side (later on we will go past another one), we will easily roll ourselves further down the shore, enjoying the interesting details and a perspective which has been changing as if on production line.

There is a particularly lovely view of the lake about 6km after the beginning of the macadam road in Orline, below Slanske strane (the Salt Lake Slopes), along the summit of which a not so distant, yet invisible main road runs. In the second part the road is overgrown with shrubs and low trees, in some places it is a real green corridor (or a trench), and occasionally it is covered with a low grass as well. Nevertheless, it is quite decent for a ride and a nice atmosphere is in abundance there. Occasionally there are short uphill sections and right after them the short downhill sections.

At 8.5 km from Orline, at the en-

trance to the little village of Kuside, we go past an old, half-submerged church on the belfry of which the bell still disobeys. Kuside is a dormant little pile of irresistible stone houses and rainwater tanks, over which a thick layer of tranquillity lies. Everything slumbers here, but as if in that slumber it also forgets to breathe, letting the ravages of time attack it twice as fast as there where everyone is awake and on the alert.

A few hundred metres after the church the asphalt road starts, and only a little further ahead there is an abandoned restaurant "Stari dvori" (The Old Palaces). A large two-storey building with balustrades and spacious „ballroom“ terraces overgrown with vine, the owners of which have not taken away all the furnishings, so that way they loaded the building with an excessive weight: an old bar, some inscriptions, a silent piece of dishes, dusty ornaments here and there, the remnants of a luster: the traces of the happier days which that remnants bear on themselves are a too heavy load for the old stone walls. But for an already a little bit tired and hungry traveller on two wheels this is a great place for a longer pause. A view of the lake from the upper terrace plus the lunch from the saddlebag equals a gala time. And some people will want to pitch a tent here as well.

After Kuside the arm along which we ride slowly ends, so we finally leave the lake. Ten kilometres after Orline, and 19km after Pandurica where we have started this leg, we return to the main road once again.

Now we are already close to Niksic and it would be necessary to, from the romantic levitation on Slano jezero (the Salt Lake), land ourselves to an everyday traffic, which is here, due to a vicinity of the town, already rather heavy. To reach the centre of Niksic we should ride an-

other 7.5km. Before that we will go past the local airport and over a wonderful old bridge on the Zeta River - Vukov most (Vuk's Bridge), 4.7km after reaching the main road.

Those who want to spend more time in Niksic – for which there are surely good reasons, since in the second-largest Montenegrin town – the town of “beer and steel”

there are lots of things to be seen and visited - should definitely go to the nearby Krupac Lake, with a surface area of nearly 6 square kilometres. It shines with blue colour in the middle of a vast karst field in which the very town nestled, and the road leading there forks left, immediately before Vukov most (Vuk's Bridge), by the Stari most Hotel (the Old Bridge Hotel). On this twin of



Slano jezero (the Salt Lake), which the natives of Niksic lovingly call „the sea“, there are a town beach, restaurant, bar, motel, sports facilities, a promenade – and even the semi-official campsite (in which therefore one should not expect some particular comfort, but there will be a lot of nice shade under the tall poplars). The lake is located 5km from the town. For those who need help or a bike repair, the right address in Niksic is the Perun Biking Club, one of the best and most successful in Montenegro.

3 NIKŠIĆ - PLUŽINE

At the roundabout in the centre of Niksic (638masl) we make a full circle and continue along Njego-seva Street (the last exit from the roundabout). After 1km we will turn left, to II Dalmatinske Street which soon continues as Nikca od Rovina Street, and then as Glibavacki put (the Glibavacki Road). This way we will leave town in peace and without the heavy traffic, going along the way past the graveyard and the Church of the Saint Archdeacon Steven (on the left). From the left side the amiable Zeta River sneaks to us, which we will cross again at 6.5km from the centre, turning left onto another of the stone bridges Niksic is decorated with. The road to Pluzine passes this way, but we will stay on that main road only until the other side of the bridge: there we turn right, and continue along a very quiet road via the villages of Zavrh and Milocani. The Zeta River is now already fully familiarised with us, so after Zavrh it gently approaches our very feet. If it is morning, the ride along this road will be a wonderful beginning of a day. If it is late afternoon, we will sneak to the night in the very best way. And if the sun is at its zenith, it would be best to sit somewhere by the shore

and treat oneself to a long pause and a lunch: those who try hard to do that won't have time to continue the journey, so then they can also spend the night amidst the murmur of water.

In the village of Vir (12.8km from Niksic, 645masl) we will turn left and venture into discovering one of the least known and visited parts of Montenegro. Before that, it's worth making several photographs of that after which the village was named: an interesting and deep water cauldron on the clear stream called Susica, slightly before the centre of the village.

There is a 60km long crossing over the Golija Mountain and the region along the border with Bosnia ahead of us – an experience which, considering the ascent and the terrain, can easily be extended to the next day. Some deserted and remote sections are also ahead of us, so before continuing we should check the essentials. Batteries in a GPS device and mobile phone? Pump? Tools? A roast pork to eat during the trip?

In the centre of Vir we turn left, and start ascent which will last for the next 19km and bring us at an elevation of 1360m above sea level. One should push hard immediately, but the asphalt road will make the pedalling easier. We slowly tackle the hill below the mighty cone of Virostak which rises on the left side, and at 7.2km from Vir we reach a nice opportunity for a rest, a pub called Duski klanac.

The pub is one of those small houses, carelessly put together, which as if they are pressed by something on their sides and because of that their red roof has jumped up, and under it some kind of a small terrace and some unprovoked small window with a grid. Then, when on something like that a nice name for a pub is proudly stuck (in the Montenegrin villages luckily people still are not the slaves of a need to give



TT1



TT2

TT1



those names after the Rome, Paris of Vienna restaurants), and when a couple of tables and chairs (not mandatory) and something a bit like a bar are provided – the business may be launched. Well, then we have to stop off here, to refresh ourselves with cold water, drink something in a company of locals and hear the latest news from the neighbourhood. It doesn't matter if we are foreigners and we don't speak the language – information is here absorbed through the skin.

At 8.3km from Vir, in a rocky, karst area below the Presjecka kula we abandon a wide asphalt road which goes towards the distant Bosnian little town of Gacko, and turn right, onto a macadam road. The next six kilometres are the hardest leg on the Golija odyssey, due to a steep ascent and poor road. We will slowly advance below the wonderfully risen, yet harsh rocks of Visoka greda and Odzina greda, until we reach our prize: an entrance to the magical valley of Nozdra.

From a small mountain pass as through a keyhole we gently descend to a few kilometre long piece of mountain poetry: a soft, flower covered green carpet, the waves of bright grass that run through a circled space which sneakily creeps among the fierce storm of rocks. A piece of unexpected tranquillity and impossible beauty which survive between the violent boiling of hills on the left side, and the bare shrew of the Golija crown on the right. A few katuns the dry, cracked walls and snow-gnawed roofs of which with the utmost effort endure above the ground, and a huge, opposite to proportions and size of everything else in the valley arranged, (another) Inca style rainwater tank. In this remote corner of the world, above all those flowers and all that grass, a stone construction, which in terms of its skilfully processed and precisely arranged stones is more like a part of some mighty fortress, reigns. One should definitely descend from

the road which climbs along the right edge of the Nozdra Valley, and go through its centre. That way, after all, we will also find ourselves on the lower side of the rainwater tank (16km from Vir, 1200masl), from where we will see it in its full size and beauty. In the vicinity there is a trail along which we can return onto the road... but one should think twice if an overnight stay in such a place is to be missed.

Getting out of the Nozdra Valley, through a narrow cirque, along the tattered stone path which with a considerable effort breaks through up the steep slope of the rock, will be again an arduous work. The first kilometre is the toughest, then the ascent becomes gentler, and at about 3km from the rainwater tank we reach the mountain pass (19km from Vir, 1360masl).

The road becomes better, and after the mountain pass we descend to another marvellous dale, in which we wind through the tall moss and burdocks. When we start ascending along its other side, below the hill called Visoki kom (1456masl, on the right), it's worth looking back occasionally - the view over that side is even lovelier.

A solid macadam road which slowly lowers us from the mountain is on its short steeper sections usually poor or it even gives way to rocks. And we pour ourselves from one splendid landscape to another, from one flower meadow fly to another, hovering from resting-place to resting-place, from ex-katun site to ex-katun site.

After another steep descent around a kilometre long, there we are again on the Niksic-Gacko asphalt road (30km from Vir, 900masl). We will turn right, towards Gacko (on the left, at 700m from the junction, there are a shop and a pub in the village of Javljen), and in the next 2km we will take a rest a little bit from the bumpy travel. There are very low trees and shrubs all around

the area, so we will have a good view over the surrounding rocky, rather interesting hills.

At the beginning of the 37th kilometre from Vir we start the last leg over Golija, leaving the asphalt road once again, and turning right onto a solid macadam road. From the south-western side of the mountain, at which the vegetation is low and there is a plenty of open space, it will take us to its wooded and mysterious northern side. We also start a second big ascent after Vir: in the next 16km we will climb from 930m to 1600m above sea level.

On the first part of the ascent we will also pass along a broad bottom of Visnjica do (a dale). It is a typical „pot“ enclosed at all four sides of the world (or all 10-12 sides of the world, which these areas usually have) with craggy hills covered with low vegetation. The atmosphere is the same as in the interior of the Dalmatian islands, so the lovers of such landscapes will feel at home.

On the other side of the dale, a steeper section of the ascent starts, and the road will be slightly poorer. In the hamlet of Potkraguj (4.8km from the asphalt road), to which we ascend along a short, steep uphill section, we go just past the entrance door of a stone house - here we can stop off for a coffee even without getting off the bike. However, the host is in his golden years and he hears poorly, so there won't be a lot of conversation after all, or it will seem more like a quarrel (A sip of coffee - a bit of shouting - a sip of coffee - a bit of shouting ...).

A steeper ascent, poorer sections of the road, and we reach an open section from which we can see Visnjica do, now already deep below us. The brown band of the road does not match the olive green surroundings here, and in that disharmony, like a deep scar, it tortures a bare slope of the hill before entering the forest again.

A few more ravines or sections in which the crags, large unrolled rocks peek out are still ahead of us. It will be better from the junction at 9.3km from the asphalt road, at which we turn right and join a nice, even macadam road. In the spring, after the snows, it might happen that there is some boulder newly settled from the neighbourhood or some fallen tree on it. The ascent is not steep anymore so we will decently fast advance towards the pass, going along the way past a few places in which the forest will clear up and lovely views will run towards us.

Around 16km after leaving the asphalt road we arrive to a discreet pass (1600m), and from there we will of course descend. Through shadows and silence, for a long time. First, through the predominantly deciduous forest and a little bit of monotony, to the Niksic – Pluzine main road.

Our 60km long adventure started in Vir, ends with reaching the main road (1120masl), about 30km after we have left the Niksic – Gacko asphalt road on Golija.

We just cross over the main road – on the other side (sideways, on the left) we join a narrow asphalt on the old road to Pluzine. A moderate uphill section a few kilometres long will take us onto a pass behind which, a deep crack of the Komarnica River Canyon will blossom. We turn towards the northwest and start a nice descent on a deserted lane which sways along the lower side of the world: there across, above the canyon, the grim peaks of Pivska planina (the Piva Mountain) stand on guard. The ride is interesting – one moment we pull through the strange, narrow crevices made in cliffs in order to enable the road to pass that way, and the next moment we are in a real tunnel of greenery which cuts out both sides of the lane, narrowing it to a mere band; immediately after that we reach the open, wide areas.

At 7.6km from the main road there is a junction (1003masl) at which we will turn right, to a short detour to another of those unforgettable places which Montenegro has to offer. Riding through the village of Rudnice, after 900m and at the end of a short uphill section, we reach a saddle on Rudnicki brijeg (the Rudnice Hill) and an ethno village called Izlazak (990masl). There we will spill, in a short, sudden moment – just the way as it should be when a beauty is to sweep us off our feet – like a drop that spilled a cup, over the rim of a deep green goblet on the bottom of which the blue apsimt of the river sparkles. And we will fall into that intoxicating drink faster than a glance, in a drinking party after which there is no hangover, just the opposite, the head returns clear and respond to the reality. It's a sin not to stay here for some time and here someone may even sleep over – just to be sure that the name Izlazak (the Getting Out) is appropriate.

The asphalt road further ahead descends to the canyon, and then ascends up its other side, but that is an experience for those who follow Top Trail 2 Route: we will turn back, towards the old road to Pluzine and the junction at which we have started our detour.

About 2km after that junction we reach the main road again, and this time we continue along it (to the right). The traffic is moderate, but one should be cautious: after long kilometres in deserted or quiet areas one should remember that there are such things like lorries, buses, white lines, left and right side of the road... In the next 4km we keep descending, and only after that (at about 1km before the place at which the road to the Piva Monastery forks off, at 866masl) our next long ascent will start. It is then a good time to sum up the descent we have left behind: from the pass on Golija it has lasted (with only a few short uphill sections) nearly



30km in total, and has taken us from 1600masl to 866masl.

And the ascent ahead of us, on the Piva Lake circuit and along the border with Bosnia, will look like this: 21km in length, and reaching an elevation of 1550m (elevation gain: around 700m).

The fork towards the nearby Piva Monastery (on the right) is located at 6.7km from the place where we have join the main road, and it is certainly a moment for a new pause in our rolling.

The Piva Monastery was built at the end of the 16th century, and from 1970 to 1982, due to construction of a dam and formation of the Piva Lake it was transferred – stone by stone together with its frescoes – to the place in which it is located now. Simple and modest exterior (the church does not have a dome) hides an exceptionally valuable frescos, icons, a piece of the Holy Cross of Our Lord Jesus Christ, the relics of King Uros I Nemanjic and several holy people, rare liturgical books. Beside the southern door there is a fresco at which a human figure in the Turkish (Ottoman)

clothing is depicted – a unique case in our and European wall painting. Its simple architecture can be better understood if one has in mind the fact that the monastery was being built in the difficult times of the Ottoman occupation of this region, and the church was the largest one which was built during that period.

About 2.7km after the fork we reach a junction (1033 masl) at which we will turn left off the main road, onto an asphalt side road to the village of Smrijecno. Beside the junction there is a roofed rest area with a wooden table and a couple of benches. Here we start around 40km long circuit which will, in the furthestmost western „pocket“ of the Montenegrin territory, take us once again along the border with Bosnia. At the furthestmost point of that circuit we will pass a remote highland area of Ravno, below the Treštenik Peak (1576m).

We ascend along a narrow lane of changeable quality, the newly repaired sections take turns with the older, cracked ones. Of course, we will rarely meet a vehicle. At the 5th kilometre from the main road

we pass through the scattered village of Smrijecno, and at 7.3km (by a monument) we join a good macadam road (the asphalt road goes right, towards the nearby Kovaci hamlet). We pass over the open area of Muratovica, charmingly patched with cultivated fields – a rare sight in the mountainous areas of Montenegro.

Further ahead the road leads us through the forest as well as along its edge – in such places (one of the loveliest is located at 10.2km from the main road) a nice view over the right side opens, where the dales green and the rocks of Paklin and Zaglavak ripen in the sun. A kilometre further ahead there is a board warning that we enter the border area. The macadam road on this section is somewhat poorer (less rolled) and in addition to that, steeper as well, so a couple of shorter downhill sections now and then will be welcome for our legs to rest. Near the end of the main section of the ascent we will reach the left edge of a low forest and beneath on that side we will spot a wonderful dale called Adzica poljana (the Adzici Field), along which in dense serpentines a brook winds.

When we finally reach the high plateau called (logically) Ravno (The Flat), below the very Sejtankula Peak (the Devil's Tower) we will come across a secluded katun (14.2km from the main road, 1530masl). After the katun the macadam road is very good again, and it takes us up-and-down over an interesting, open landscape, through lovely sights. However, we still predominantly ascend, and that way it will stay until we reach the cemetery in the place called Kula (the Tower) (16.6km from the main road). This is the highest point on the circuit (1550masl), so in the next 13km we will descend, all the way to near the Piva Lake.

One should follow a new, broad and good macadam road which goes right, but searchers for love-

ly vantage points and those who want more climbing may continue straight ahead, along an old, rocky path, which up the grassy slope, leads to around 700m away summit of the Trestenik Mountain (1576m). An area surrounding the summit is very pleasant: a rounded, gently rolling plateau with a small pile of stones (a cairn), a soft meadow, a great view (the peaks of the Zelenogora Mountain, the Bioc Mountain and the Volujak Mountain as well as the peaks of the massifs of Sinjavina and Durmitor...), an abundance of space to sit and have a snack – well, those are the reasons for this little detour. In addition to that, one does not have to go back from the summit: on the other side, to the asphalt road, that is to say to reconnection with the route, one descends rapidly along the trail through a meadow (slightly more than 1km – this way, actually, before the construction of the new macadam road the TT1 Route ran).

There we are at the furthestmost section of our circuit, which is also the one closest to Bosnia – it's less than 10km from the town of Gacko as the crow flies.

After around 3km of the macadam road and low forest, we reach an asphalt road (19.5km from the main road), head along it to the right, and soon we go past a little village of Mramor. As we roll above the gorge of Zukovska rijeka (the Zukovska River), our descent will become steeper and faster. We will pass a few short tunnels, and after the second, a junction as well (26.2km from the main road, 860masl) at which one should stop and think a little bit: from here the road towards the Stabna village and Stabanska jezera (the Stabna Lakes) forks left, so those who love secluded and less accessible areas might want to make a detour to there.

The lakes are two tiny mountain eyes surrounded with forest, set



into a narrow gorge between the mountains of Lebršnik and Bioc. The forest path leading there branches off at the ramp, about 500m after leaving the main road. To the little lake (1250masl), there is slightly less than 4km, and to the big one (1325masl, a trail) about 4.5km. If the lake water level is high (in early spring, after the snow melting), the trail leading to the big lake may be under water and then the only option left is to slowly break through the forest roadless area – in such conditions it is better to give up a visit.

Near the end of the descent and around 30km after we have left the main road, we reach a place at which a road leading around the lake comes from the left. We turn right and downhill, cross a little bridge over the Vrbnica River, and straight away go past the Vrbnica Campsite – a charming little heap of wooden cabins with a restaurant, on the left, below the road. At the side towards the river there is also a vast meadow suitable for pitching tents, so those who think that tiny Pluzine is still too urban for their taste, will find a convenient sleeping place here.

Through a pleasant area with meadows and low deciduous forest we reach the shore of the western arm of the Piva Lake, then along a nice

road and with a little bit of ascent at the end, we soon reach the youngest town in the Balkans – Pluzine (750masl).

When at the end of 1975 the construction of the Mratinje Dam was finished and the accumulation lake formed, the old Pluzine remained under water. Nevertheless, unlike the Antique this Montenegrin Atlantis has got in time a new place and a new life on the shore of the lake. In the little town around 1,400 hospitable inhabitants live today, who, however, when we do not see them and while they are sitting at their secret neighbours' coffees, surely wave off with their hands and whisper to each other in confidence "Oh, that was a close call!"

4 PLUŽINE - TRSA - KANJON SUŠICE - ŽABLJAK

At the petrol station in Pluzine we return to the main road to Nikšić once again. Now we will continue along it to the left, towards Scepan Polje. A gentle downhill section will after slightly more than a kilometre bring us to a bridge over the lake. The bridge is a decorative brooch of the surrounding landscape, a precious silver thread by which a deep blue beauty of the lake water is emphasised and highlighted. But a traveller, who guesses a magical



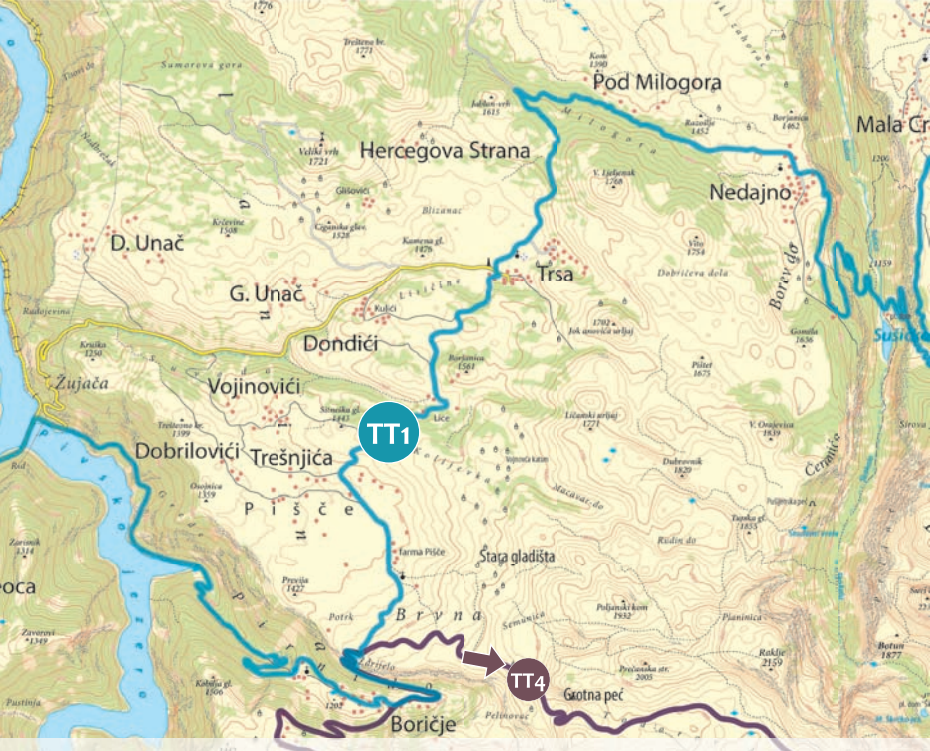
spot of the bridge and stops there for a while, will get even more than that. One who, fully awakened, patient and enchanted, manage there to bend and push with his eye a straight, slender line of concrete, which like a foamy trail behind some huge ship strives from one shore to another, will shoot from such a bow one of those magical arrows of glance about which every traveller constantly dreams: the arrow which brings a total and thorough understanding of the entire landscape. Such understanding beyond which there are no remains or that discrete and quiet, but undoubtedly bitter note which, anyway, always accompanies a traveller - regret for being only a stranger and passer-by, and not the lifetime companion to a beauty spilt by the road.

Just after the bridge there is a junction at which we will turn right, into a short tunnel. A little further ahead we will come across another junction, maybe the most unusual in Montenegro: it is located in the middle of the second short tunnel the walls of which are live crags. From the right wall an oval opening adds more daylight onto a strange arrangement of shadows, road signs and destinies which that road signs determine to us. To the left one ascends to the village of Trsa and to the skirts of the Durmitor Mountain (Top Trail 4 Route), and we will continue straight ahead, towards the

southeast and along the shore of the lake.

The road ascends above the lake, so we will enjoy the lovely landscape for some more time before we definitely leave it behind. On this section, from the left, the cliffs loom above us like the frontages of the cathedrals, and the seven short tunnels in live crag are their seven entrances. Finally, we separate from Piva and enter Pirni do (the Pirni Dale), and our ascent becomes harder. Through a low forest we wind along the floor of a narrow valley which as if it is located at the end of the world, climbing into the skirts of Pivska planina (the Piva Mountain). This is not, however, the end of the world, the houses of the village of Boricje will convince us of that. Before we reach them, we will pass over a little improvised basketball court, which shyly uses the asphalt road at one junction.

The most difficult section of the ascent starts in the village (10.2km from the bridge, 1220masl): in the next 2km we will ascend to a high, almost vertical northern wall of Pirni do, to the place called Zdrijelo (a col). There are many zdrijela (cols) in Montenegro, and whenever locals or the map herald some of those, it is certain that we can expect a quite of a sweating... We leave the asphalt road, and along a macadam road which soon becomes poorer (un-



rolled), we head upwards, through a low forest, climbing above the village seemingly slowly and with an effort, but actually, conquering the height so fast as if we are carried by some kind of a helicopter. The short sections of better and poorer road take turns – only our steady progressing towards the sky will be constant.

The final few hundred metres are the steepest (i.e. the extreme ones: the gradient is 15-20%, and the macadam road is the poorest right there, as it usually goes in the universe), so we will reach the meadows on the gently rolling plateau of Pivska planina (the Piva Mountain) both wet and truly panted. Straight away we join a narrow asphalt road from the distant Zabljak (13.1km from the bridge, 1490masl) and we head along it to the left, towards the village of Trsa.

On the bike there is never a beauty which is not paid with an effort, but equally there is no effort which will stay unrewarded - our reward this

time is an open area decorated with glittering pastures, to which we descend past a dormant and scattered little village of Pišće, through the wideness in which thoughts flourish and grow without obstacles... Slowly and easily, easily ... a church and a graveyard, the buildings of a large farm, a couple of houses – all that actually goes past us while we stand still on the bike. On the other side of a shallow grassy valley in which the village of Pišće lies, our „credit“ runs out and we head uphill, along a not particularly demanding section, on the last leg towards Trsa.

Trsa (21.1km from the bridge, 1430masl) is unusual: in a small space a sufficient number of stone „official“ buildings which serve the needs of the locals is gathered, only that there are none of them – the locals. It seems that even that little heap of stone walls and roofs is too metropolitan for them, so they scattered their small houses and little estates all over the neighbourhood, in a labyrinth of low hills, over the rocky basins, slopes and dales. For a



traveller, however, in the „centre“ of Trsa there are enough facilities, just as much as it should be: a pub in which one can eat well, and just behind it a “load” of wooden cabins in which one can stay overnight for a decent price. If we add to that low and high, rounded and spiky ... rocky peaks set around a flat pan in which we are located and which shelters us from an entire big world, it may easily happen that this is to be one of those places in which one spends a whole day without knowing why exactly. Unless it was just an idleness for the sake of the very idleness, while we have been watching something that we have forgotten later– and after all, without pang of conscience, with a filtered memory that the time spent there for some reason has been very nice.

From Trsa we will continue to the north, along the asphalt road which leads towards the distant Sčepan Polje. However, after 3.5km, in the wooded area called Milogora, we will come across a junction at which we have to turn right, towards a lit-

tle village of Nedajno (the road to Sčepan Polje runs straight ahead). We will soon get out of the forest, onto an open, hilly, exceptionally beautiful area along which our asphalt road winds and hops wonderfully.

In the very Nedajno, 7.9km from Trsa, there is a new junction at which we will leave the asphalt road and turn left, onto a macadam road and into a new, exciting adventure: a descent to an immense Susica River Canyon.

A few hundred metres after the junction we go past a little local pub beside which there are also a couple of rooms for rent, and then we continue uphill towards a fantastic vantage point at the rim of the canyon (0.8km from the asphalt road, 1470masl). Another place impossible to forget, and this time on the „menu“ there is an opportunity to take a good look at and perceive a magnificent yet cruel beauty of a huge crack in the Earth's crust. The canyon stretches beyond human

measures, beyond dimensions we can cope with, and just one spot like this, a tiny deck above the storm of its furious depth, above the foam of bubbling distance, gives us a chance to see it before it swallows us.

It is hard for a look to settle in one place in this wonderful chaos. Maybe it will take a rest for a moment only in the distance, where an angry clash with the Tara River Canyon is foreseen and breaking through its sun-smoked cliffs. Or maybe it will lie in peace only on the other side of the world, on which the sky above the Susica River Canyon is cut by the opposite wall and a serene plateau with pastures on it, which as this on our side, up to the last moment hides the break and chasm above which we have hooked on only by miracle.

SUSICA: THE RIVER, THE CANYON

It is said that the Susica River once had a constant flow, but the ancient enormous floods had broken through the passages into the chasms under it, and after that it became unsteady: from its source to the confluence with the Tara River it sinks and returns to the surface several times. Its canyon is 14 km long and it is one of the most beautiful and largest canyons in the Balkans. Along with the canyons of the Tara River, the Komarnica River,

and the Piva River it forms some kind of a ring around the Durmitor Mountain and it is a part of the national park of the same name.

Right after the vantage point we start a descent. A macadam road in a decent condition (in some places less rolled) bends into the serpentine as it carefully crawls down the western wall of the canyon. Along the way we can help ourselves to blackberries and raspberries which, in the season, are found there in abundance. After slightly more than 5km (6km from the asphalt road in Nedajno), we will reach the bottom of the canyon (1150masl - 320m below the vantage point), at which there is a mountain hut. A path which forks right leads to it, and the very mountain hut is some hundred metres away, hidden behind a bend. In the time of the spring snow melting behind the hut there is a lake, however by the summer it dries up and leaves behind a wonderful carpet of high, silky grass which under the arm of a breeze changes its colour, from dark green, over the lighter one, to nearly silver. That way the spirit of the vanished water still rolls along the grass which remembers, and in the nest of the lake the silent waves still murmur.

Through the canyon one can hike, especially upstream, through a prime-





val forest with centuries-old black pines, towards the Skakala waterfall and the Skrka Valley, so surely there will be those who will want to stay here for a while. The others, and in particular those who won't like the fact that there are bears too on that side, after a pause will face the ascent up the opposite wall of the canyon, so in a day they will complete a rather epic journey: first the descent, not exactly to the very centre of the Earth, but certainly nearly to Hades, and then a heroic return onto the surface of the world.

On the eastern wall there is a zone in which rockslides occur (particularly in spring after snow melting), so the condition of the road is pretty often changed. When bulldozer goes along it and „combs“ the messy macadam it will be solid, and then this (steep) snake which winds through the forest will slowly decay again - until the next combing. Summary: we will surely get out of the canyon, but with a little bit of luck that will be somewhat easier.

We reach the eastern edge of the canyon as well as the beginning of the asphalt road after 5.2km (11.3km from the asphalt road in Nedažno). The elevation of that place is 1530masl – and there we are at 380m above the bottom of the canyon.

Further ahead the ascent is easier, at least because of the asphalt un-

der our wheels. We go past the village of Mala Crna Gora (Little Montenegro) (on the left from our road, about a kilometre away) and enter the area which as if it has been made for a fun on the bicycle: a narrow asphalt road winds through a coniferous forest, through short depressions and over the gentle bumps, over which we will sometimes pass even without pedalling – carried by inertia from the previous downhill section. In these irresistible surroundings the ride will be a true pleasure.

MALA CRNA GORA AND NEDAŽNO

At first sight, it seems that one could, following a ball or going after the sheep, come from one village to another in a minute. Nevertheless, if someone gets it wrong and with a faith runs towards those roofs over there which as if they can be reached by one's hand, in the middle of the flat and gentle meadows, suddenly and without warning a huge chasm will open before him, and the villages will turn into the frightened birds crouched on the edges of that chasm. What have they done to bring this damnation upon themselves, how come they have deserved that their inhabitants do not meet and know each other? Has a girl cursed an unfaithful boyfriend on the other side? Or some wedding parties have started a fight? Has a son forgotten his father? Or a beggar has been driven off the



doorsteps? Strangely enough, there is no legend to explain how come there's a canyon between the two villages, or their inhabitants keep it for themselves only...

Nevertheless, our flight to the heights is yet far away from being done. Before we finally rush downhill towards the still distant Zabljak, we will have to pass below the peak of Veliki Stuoc (2104mⁿv) and over the mountain pass on it, which with its 1950m above sea level is one of the highest spots on the asphalt roads in Montenegro.

The first part of the ascent also leads through conifers, but when we get out of there onto the open area one of the loveliest sections which we can make on bicycle in Montenegro will start. One should frequently stop and look around because behind us an extraordinary view of the peaks of Zelengora, Volujak, Bioc, Maglic...blooms (An additional reason for pauses will also be the gradient of the road – in some places around 12%). Besides the crack of Susica, the Tara River Canyon as well slowly appears, and the best vantage point to that side is the very mountain pass (8km from the beginning of the asphalt road).

The difference in elevation between the bottom of the Susica River Can-

yon and the mountain pass on the Stuoc Peak is 800m, at the distance of 13.3km. Is it worth it? No doubt!

After the mountain pass the most beautiful part of the journey is ahead of us: an easy winding descent through a low macchia and open space along which the horizons roar. From the place in which one turns left to the nearby cable car and Momcilov grad Restaurant (a terrace with an exceptional view of Zabljak and the surroundings with Crno jezero (the Black Lake)), the descent becomes steeper. The road is narrow so one should not let the thrill and passion for speed suppress the cautiousness: the traffic is weak but at least one vehicle will turn up before us from some of the frequent blind bends. After all, it would be a pity to spend these kilometres rushing downhill: that way we would miss enjoying an extraordinary landscape in more detail, in which from the green alpine valleys the peaks from the crown of the Durmitor rise towards the sky.

We enter the coniferous forest again, where we will pass a place in which a road towards the famous vantage point of Curevac (a view over the Tara River Canyon) forks left. From the forest we will descend to the picturesque valley of Pitomine and from there one has to tackle another moderate hill, and



there we are in Zabljak.

Zabljak is a former caravan stop-off point, the highest little town in the Balkans (1456masl), the largest settlement on Durmitor (around 2,000 inhabitants), and the epicentre of mountain activities, winter and outdoor sports on this mountain. Here one can spend days, or even weeks hiking and biking (local tours), before continuing the journey along our route. From numerous possible tours on two wheels one should definitely mention the tour around Crno jezero (the Black Lake) and a short (around 35km) but outstanding circuit Zabljak - Njegovudja - Bare Zugica - Riblje jezero (the Fish Lake) and Vrazje jezero (the Devil's Lake) - Zabljak.

Apart from hotels and private accommodation, in the immediate surroundings of Zabljak there are also several campsites.

even the glaciers would not be a surprise, and on the left, the green pastures of Sinjavina are rolling, here and there decorated with the jewellery of rocks, which claim that we are now in gentle low areas, in which only a thought that we are passing too fast through this region is cruel.

In the middle of that merry squabble which comes from the two sides of the world, which are, as it seems, a thousand kilometres apart, we reach a junction (5.1km from the centre of Zabljak) from which we will continue along an old, quieter road. Soon we pass the junction at Vrazje jezero (the Devil's Lake). It's worth stopping a journey for a moment here and walk a few tens of metres to the left, to the hill, below which in the dale a little lake of unusual turquoise colour is hidden. Its beauty is emphasised by the simplicity of the surroundings - gently curved lines of the bright green meadows slowly stream down from all around and meet in the dale, attracted by an irresistible gravity of the sky framed on the surface of the water. For those to whom this little lake is not enough, a little further ahead there is another, Riblje jezero (The Fish Lake). An asphalt road from the hill leads there (and all together, it is a part of the above mentioned local circuit via Njegovudja and Bare Zugica).

5

**ŽABLJAK - SINJAVINA -
VRATLO - DOLINA
LIPOVA - KOLAŠIN**

From Zabljak we head to the south, along the new road to Niksic. After getting out of the town, on the right, the mighty silhouettes of the Sljeme Peak and the Savin kuk Peak rise, which tell us that we are now in the tall, cruel mountains in which



But let's return to our route: from Vražje jezero (the Devil's Lake) the road heads downhill, running amongst the low hills. After 3.6km (13.3km from Zabljak, 1388masl) we will turn off the road towards Savnik to the left, over the short little bridge. Less than a kilometre further ahead (14.1km from Zabljak), the asphalt road ends and a good macadam road starts. We start the ascent to the open sea of Sinjavina.

The ascent is not particularly steep, but the road can occasionally be rather poor (loose, less rolled), therefore in such places it will be necessary to pedal really hard. In return the landscape is unusual and exceptional: narrow ravines and passages take us through a labyrinth of low hills covered only with grass and meres of wild flowers. When the morning sun forges the gushing sparks from those soft curves, everything around bubbles with cheerfulness - and there's a pleasant unease in the soul for us, which will make us move and find out what's behind the next hill.

It is a deserted area, only occasionally



we will go past a lonely household or katun. After Curovica katun below the hill called Konjska glava (the Horse's Head) (9.3km from the road to Savnik) we enter an area with low forest, mainly deciduous, but also spiced with conifers.

The next katun, at 11.7km from the road to Savnik, should be active already from the early spring, as soon as the road becomes passable. A few hundred metres further ahead (12.1km from the road to Savnik), at the junction on Ralovo brdo (Rale's Hill) we join the left, macadam side road covered with low grass. For that reason we will barely identify it on the nearby little hill, and a similar thing will occur in the next kilometres as well: in some places we will recognise the road only by stones along its edges. In the fog or in the dark this would definitely be hard, but in the daytime the orientation should not be a problem: along a long slope of Kekerska glava and Krivo brdo (on the right above us) we ascend towards a few kilometres away local pass. The landmark is also the ruin of a large stone house in the place called Okruglica (on the left, 13.1km from the road to Savnik). After the pass the road is clearly visible again.

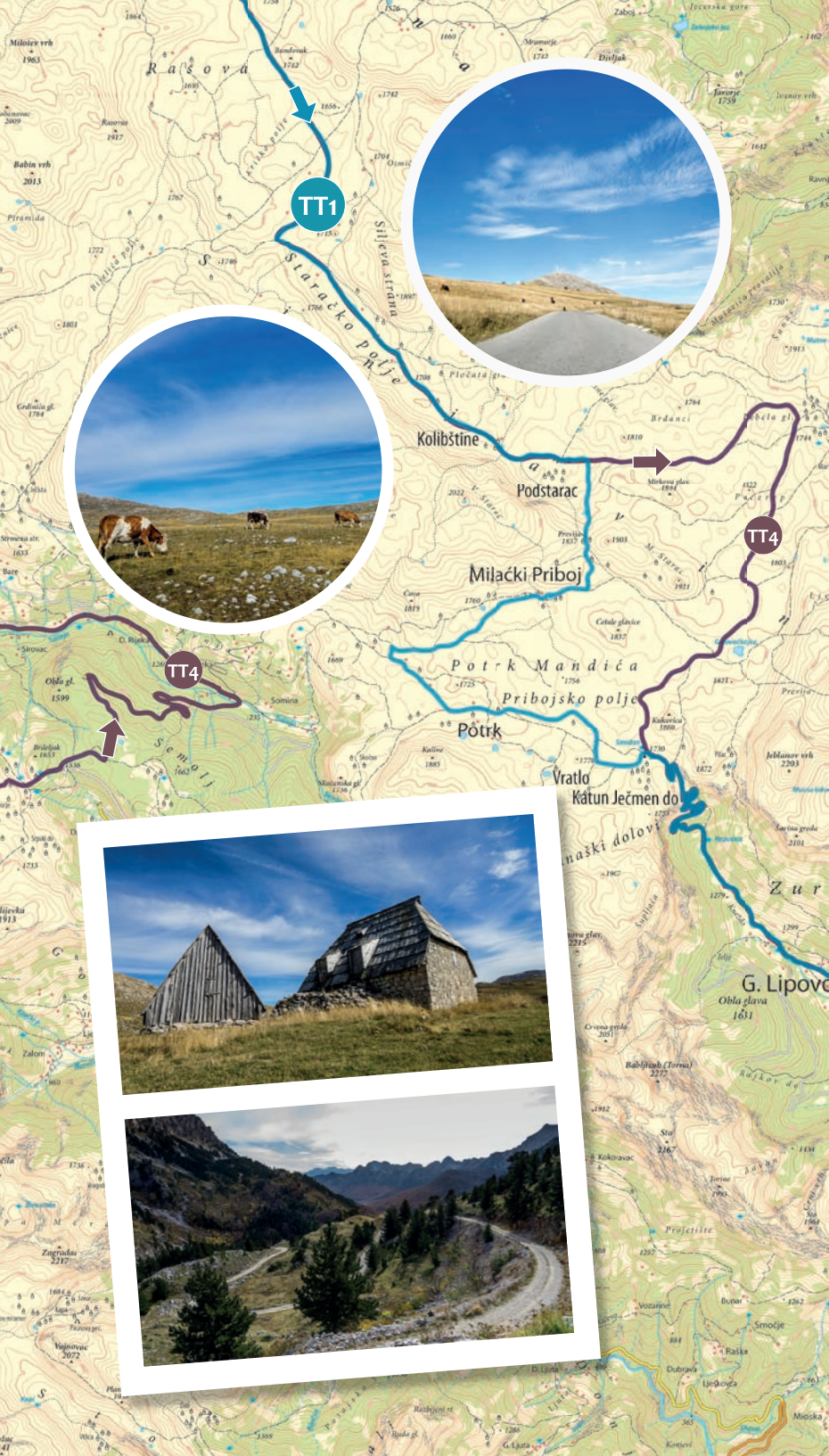
THE MONTENEGRIN TIBET

Sinjavina or Sinjajevina (in resolving this constant dilemma even the inhabitants of its katuns won't help - Sinjavina should be its old name) is a very characteristic mountain. Leaned on Durmitor and petrified above the canyons of the Tara River and the Moraca River, this vast, rolling limestone high plateau with few forests, formed by glaciers and erosion, represents the largest massif in Montenegro (40km in length, 15km in width) and it is practically the biggest Montenegrin pasture as well. It follows other Dinarides, stretching in the direction east - west, at an average elevation of 1600-1700m. On Sinjavina there are six peaks taller than 2000m, the tallest being Babin zub (2277masl). It is bounded by a water ring (the rivers Tara, Moraca, Tusinja and Bukovica), and adorned with two mountain eyes: Zminicko jezero (the Zminica Lake) (in the vicinity of Njegovudja) and Zabojsko jezero (the Zabo Lake) (above a section of the Tara River Canyon called Dobrilovina).

The roads are mostly solid macadam, although we will often come across the shorter poorer sections as well (less rolled macadam on which it is harder to ride or even the rocky road surface). In the case of rainy weather, however, one doesn't have to worry much about the mud).



Sinjavina is a little bit moody and ill-tempered - the clouds are found more often here than in other places, and they usually stay here slightly longer than in other places. It is also one of those places because of which we strongly recommend not to set off to the TT Routes without a GPS. Although the routes are fully marked with signposts, one never knows if each of them will stand in its place and without that almost at each of the numerous junctions in this sparsely populated expanse one may go to the wrong side. The largest part of Sinjavina is not covered by mobile phone signal.



TT1

TT4

TT4



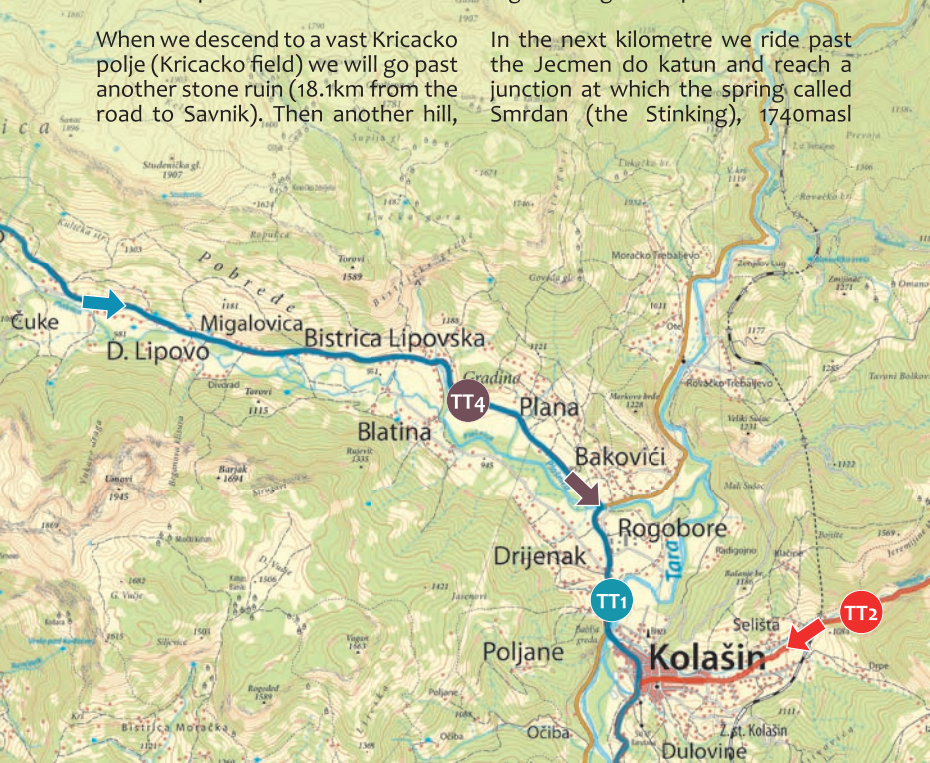
Little up, then little down, a little bit of decent road, then a little bit of swimming on the stormy stone band – that's how the ride over this vast plateau looks like. Immense green waves are rolling to the horizon, but our fragile little ship with two wheels successfully navigates them, rescuing itself from the dales, triumphantly reaching the crests. The only thing that doesn't change is a unique allure of the areas through which we pass, and in which an almost Mars-like cruelty of landscapes is mixed with a poetical embroidery of grass and flowers: in some places only one little cloth of the frail stems and blue, yellow and white petals is enough to bridle and calm the kicking of rock over which it has dripped. Sinjavina is a world beyond any other world, a planet for itself, a space of karst fields and low rounded peaks along which one can roam for days, a magic and a dream of every adventurer thirsty for wilderness and solitude, a rough and harsh paradise – and it will be a source of our inspiration, respect and anxiety on every kilometre which we pass on it.

When we descend to a vast Kricacko polje (Kricacko field) we will go past another stone ruin (18.1km from the road to Savnik). Then another hill,

and there we are in the next valley called Staracko polje (The Old Men Field). At the beginning of it there is the Rovcanin katun (21.8km from the road to Savnik, 1640masl) which also becomes active in the spring, as soon as the road becomes passable (a snow removal vehicle usually comes to this place). The hosts are kind in that sincere highlander-like manner, and they are never without top-quality milk, clotted cream, smoked ham, bacon and fresh flat bread.

After Staracko polje we turn to the south (straight ahead the TT4 Route continues) and at 28.7km from the road to Savnik, below the Mali starac Peak (A Little Old Man), we reach Previja, the highest point on our journey over Sinjavina (1835masl). A 5km descent to Pribojsko polje (1670masl) and then 3km ascent to the Vratlo Mountain pass (1760masl, 37km from the road to Savnik) follow. The terrain is still clad in a decent grassy suit, but it is in many spots worn-out and frayed, therefore under the patches a „lining“ of rough rock peeks all around.

In the next kilometre we ride past the Jecmen do katun and reach a junction at which the spring called Smrdan (the Stinking), 1740masl





- is located. One should not judge something by its name: the water from this spring is cold and drinkable. Here we reconnect with the TT4 Route, which comes from the left, and then we continue straight ahead and downhill, towards a marvellous alpine valley of the village of Lipovo.

We drop into a narrow and long valley from its northern end, past the Pekova glava (Peko's Head) Peak (1872masl) which rises from the left. Descending down the Vratlo mountain pass and numerous serpentine of the road, slowly immersing into this extraordinary space precisely along its axis, we will enjoy a slow changing of views and perspectives. The valley is from the north-eastern side closed by the massif of Pekova glava Peak, Jablanov vrh Peak (2203masl), Savina greda Peak (2101masl) and Sudenacka glava Peak (1907masl), and from the western side by Supljaca Peak (2011masl), Vranova glava Peak (2215masl) and Babin zub Peak (2277masl). That way Sinjavina says goodbye to us with fireworks of its highest peaks, and leaves us to their

spectacular contrast – the gentleness of the valley of Lipovo.

At the end of the section with serpentine we go past the spring called Ropusica (5.5km from the Smrdan spring). The descent is gentle further ahead, and at 45km from the road to Savnik we reach the beginning of an asphalt road. A kilometre further ahead, on the edge of the village of Gornje Lipovo, there is a charming and original little pub in ethno-style called Hajducka pecina (the Hayduk Cave), a great place for a pause.

Our long descent from Sinjavevina ends by reaching the Mojkovac - Kolasin - Podgorica main road (930masl, 56km from the road to Savnik). The downhill section from Previjska mountain pass has been 27.5km long (an elevation loss of 900m), and from the Vratlo mountain pass 19.5km (an elevation loss of 830m).

On the main road we will turn left, towards Mojkovac. The traffic is heavy here and people drive fast, but after only 2km, at the junction



in the semi-tunnel above the Tara River, we turn left (cautiously - this is a particularly treacherous place), towards the nearby centre of Kolasin (953masl).

In this little town with a population of about 3,000 inhabitants, a former Turkish (Ottoman) caravan station on the road from the coast towards the north and the site of many battles, we will pass through the centre and pedestrian zone. It's definitely worth staying there for a while, to enjoy the atmosphere, restaurants and gardens of cafes, and above all, it is recommended to take part in the evening promenade. Kolasin certainly offers even more than this – from an interesting history and great botanical garden, to the excellent base for sports and outdoor activities on the nearby mountains and in the national parks, as well as rafting on the Tara River.



Wild Beauty



6 KOLAŠIN - PREKOBRĐE - PREKORNICA - DANILOVGRAD

From Kolasin we continue to the south, following the right bank of the Tara River. At 1.5km from the centre we will turn right, onto a new bridge over the river, and return to the main road towards Podgorica, along which we will ride in the next 6km. At 8.1km from the centre of Kolasin and at an elevation of 1035masl we reach a place at which we will turn left, onto the asphalt road towards Crkvine.

After around 400m we reach the church, at which the asphalt road ends and a macadam road starts. In the wall around the churchyard there are two drinking fountains: one is consecrated, and the other, as a plaque informs us, was built by the JNA (the YPA - the Yugoslav People's Army) and adorned with a five-pointed star. The drinking fountains live in harmony, and smile at passers-by from their wall.

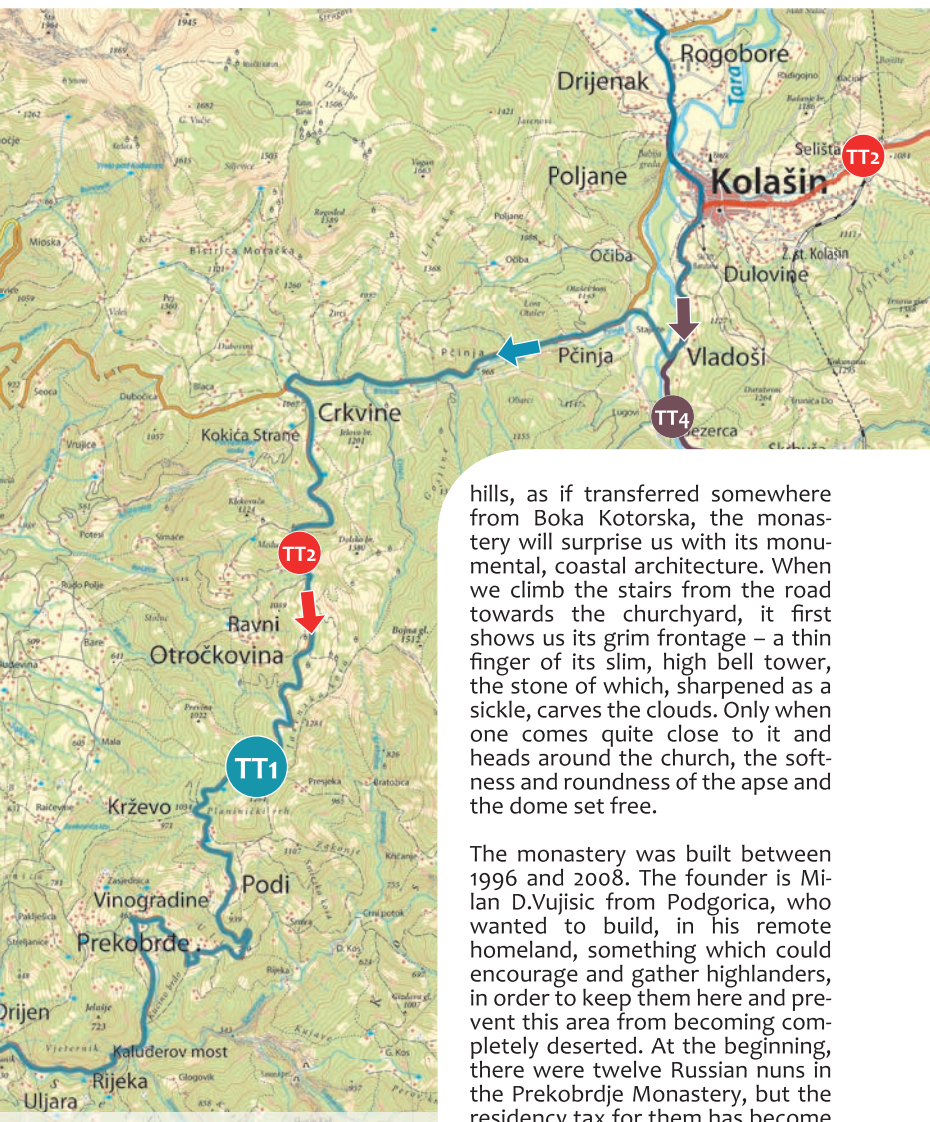
We ascend through the forest, along a good road – the rough-

ness of the macadam has been smoothed by a layer of earth, so the ride is pleasant, and only occasionally, on short sections, from underneath slightly more stones peek. At 1.4km from the main road there is a designated spring (on the left), and at 2.6km there is a place from which we may watch the horizon conquered and divided by two masses: on the left, there is an explosion of the Maganik Mountain and Moracke planine (the Moraca Mountains), on the right, Sinjavina jealously keeps guard above the valley of Lipovo, and between them, a piece of the sky stands in anxiety.

At 4.6km from the main road we go past another lovely vantage point towards Moracke planine (the Moraca Mountains) on the west. At Jasenska kosa we reach the mountain pass (6.8km, 1195masl) after which the road gradually becomes poorer. After a few kilometres of the up-and-down riding through the forest (with more descending), along the road on which after the heavier rains there could be a lot

of spots with mud, we go past another spring (9.7km, 1013masl – a pipe through which the water runs down into a hollowed log). Slightly further ahead there is a piece of the open area with a couple of houses (on the right, by the road), from where we can see a distant entrance to Platije, the deepest section of the Moraca River Canyon (on the right), while on the left, sharp, leered peaks of the Zijovo Mountain peek (along the border with Albania, above Bukumirsko jezero (the Bukumiri Lake) and Rikavacko jezero (the Rikavac Lake)). In the depth below us there is a narrow valley through which we will pass soon.

Now the road already descends steeply and it is of somewhat better quality, but it is still predominantly dirt road. At 11.5km from the main road, we will pass a very poor section, luckily only some hundred metres long, and at 13.4km we reach the Preko-brdje Monastery (the Saint Michael the Archangel Monastery) (note that it is the nunnery). Located on a high throne in the



nuns have remained - one has been there for five years, and the other two already for an entire decade. (The tax for three of them is 2,000 euros a year...) Just beside the monastery there is also an old, now closed school.

From the monastery we ride down a steep macadam road which will become increasingly better as we descend into the valley of the Prekobrdje village. The surroundings is great and kilometres run

hills, as if transferred somewhere from Boka Kotorska, the monastery will surprise us with its monumental, coastal architecture. When we climb the stairs from the road towards the churchyard, it first shows us its grim frontage – a thin finger of its slim, high bell tower, the stone of which, sharpened as a sickle, carves the clouds. Only when one comes quite close to it and heads around the church, the softness and roundness of the apse and the dome set free.

The monastery was built between 1996 and 2008. The founder is Milan D.Vujisic from Podgorica, who wanted to build, in his remote homeland, something which could encourage and gather highlanders, in order to keep them here and prevent this area from becoming completely deserted. At the beginning, there were twelve Russian nuns in the Prekobrdje Monastery, but the residency tax for them has become so expensive that now only three fast, and one should stop and look around occasionally, to catch the last views of the church and its bell tower, since the exceptionality of their position is maybe even more emphasised from below. First such a place is at 1.5km from the monastery – from there we will see them rising above the greenery above us.

The steepest section of the descent ends at the crossing over the Rastak brook (2.2km from the monastery, 465masl), but the downhill





section doesn't end there – we will keep descending, riding low along the slopes of the Vjetarnik Hill, above the Sjevernica Stream. It is especially lovely to pass this way in the late afternoon shade, through already dim colours of ferns, while on the other side of the little valley the slopes of Dedina ravan still glow in the sun.

The last chance to take a look at the monastery is at 4.2km from it. We reach an asphalt road (in somewhat poorer condition, but still good for riding) at 5.3km from the monastery (18.7km from the main road). Around 300m before that place we will come across a rare sight for our region: a simple cable car put together of car parts, for transferring objects (and who knows, maybe even some braver locals) to the other side of the Sjevernica Stream). In the hamlet of Jabuka (6.9km from the monastery), the stream forms a lovely whirlpool, and from there the asphalt road will be excellent as well. The valley through which we pass is fascinating and romantic at the same time. We ride up and down along the very river and through the wooded dales and

in each of them several houses are situated; there are wonderful yards and heaps of other things at which the eye will lie with pleasure.

Near Sreteski krs we go past a little wooden bridge without handrails, and there our long descent finally ends (9.1km from the monastery, 22.4km from the main road, 210masl). And after we pass below the Sreteski krs we will meet the Kolasin - Podgorica main road again (24km after we have previously abandoned it, 230masl).

We reach the main road near the village of Medjurijecje and at the very beginning of the bridge over the Moraca River. We will turn left and cross over it, and then after 750m, having passed through a short tunnel, before the next bridge turn right, onto a narrow asphalt road. That road first descends under the bridge, and then it starts ascending steeply (from 237masl). The ascent is strenuous (9-12%) and it leads through the low vegetation, along a narrow ravine. This is just the beginning of a hard work which is ahead of us: in the next 16km we will ascend up Vlahovici onto the Prekor-



nica Mountain, up to an elevation of 1500m (1260m of elevation gain in comparison to the main road).

At 1.4km from the main road we go past a lonely Radosev lug shop-pub (or is it actually a pub-shop?). This is one of those typical places in Montenegro which simply must not be skipped if we want our journey to have a soul. One should, therefore, stop and walk into a concrete little house in which, on the counter and on the walls completely covered by shelves, there are all possible and impossible goods which could (but do not have to) be needed by people from the neighbourhood. From matches, over the plastic Chinese toys, agricultural tools, pots and kettles, flour, padlocks, onions and pickles, to beer, Coke and cognac. And once we choose what we will drink and eat, we should move to the second phase of the ritual: getting out and sitting down at the bench in front of one of the massive, simply hewn wooden tables in the „pub“ section. Here we will straight away meet a couple of locals who with a loza (grape brandy, grappa) or a beer (in the concrete trough close at hand, where ice

cold spring water baptises and prepares the next bottles for usage) discuss daily politics and local news. We will likely be offered with a “ka-filoza”: a cup of Turkish coffee, a small glass of loza, and a chitchat. And very soon we will know everything about their life and the life in this region (which can be very interesting), about transportation of logs along the mountainous roads, as well as the condition of the very roads (which can be very useful, especially in spring when snow melts). The contents of loza in kafiloza every two-wheel traveller will have to determine for himself/herself – one should only try hard to be in condition to sit on the bike after such a meaningful conversation.

We will soon leave the forest and find ourselves on a very attractive section, crazily pasted on the nearly vertical slope of the hill along which our path crawls boldly and obstinately in a Himalayan manner. From its serpentine we will have a nice view over the Moraca River Canyon and the peaks of the Sinjajevina mountain range, behind which the valley of the village of Lipovo is hidden, and on the horizon, straight

ahead of us, if we know where to look, we will also spot a part of the road along which we have descended from Jasenska kosa to the Prekobrdje Monastery.

We enter the forest again. At 3.2km from the main road (490masl) there is a place from which the serpentine which we have left behind are best seen – attractive and great for taking pictures, as well as for the morale. On this section the asphalt road is excellent, but the ascent is still steep. At 3.7km there is a spring (on the right, water runs from a pipe), and at 6.2km (775masl) we come across a junction at which we turn left and uphill, branching off the TT2 Route (it goes right and downhill, towards Maganik).

The ascent is not so steep anymore (8-9%), and vistas are of course guaranteed, especially once we go above the lovely meadows in Velji do (7.2km from the main road). From this angle the wall of Rovacka glava and Platije, in the Moraca River Canyon, appear especially mighty. From here, however, the asphalt road is poorer – cracked and patched, but still decent for riding.

We enter a lovely beech forest in which the asphalt road is better – in memory and long remembrance, because we soon abandon it (9.4km from the main road, 1060masl) and turn right, along a very steep (15-16%) and poor (unrolled) macadam road. After a few hundred metres the ascent becomes slightly less steep (9-12%) and the macadam road becomes better. In this region the traces of frequent arsons are noticeable, and even the next dale through which we pass is called Ravne paljevine (the Flat Arsons). Leaving it, on the east we will be able to see the Komovi Mountains, some thirty kilometres away. The macadam road is occasionally poor again (large stones), so in lots of places we will probably have to push our bike.

At the 16th km from the main road we reach a mountain pass (1507m). Immediately afterwards we pass along the edge of an ex-katun site called Brajovicka Ponikvica and reach the junction at which we will turn left. From the right, from Niksicka Zupa, the TT4 Route comes and joins our route.

Ever since we have first turned from the main road towards Crkvine and the Prekobrdje Monastery, the most of the time we have ridden through the forest. On a hot summer day this will feel good, and the lovers of forest scents, light and shadows will feel at home, but it is also possible that here, on Prekoronica, such surroundings will already seem occasionally monotonous to us. Therefore the ex-katun sites like Ponikvica and some clearings will be welcome changes of the landscape. In that regard good news come after the junction as well: straight away we pass a second part of Brajovica Ponikvica (on the right), and slightly further ahead, Suva Ponikvica (on the left) as well.

Slightly after the junction a short descent from the mountain pass (1.5km) also ends, and we will have to head uphill once again. This time it is more an up-and-down riding, all the way until, from the direction of the west, we turn to the southeast, and on the Starcino brdo Hill (22.6km from the main road, 1460masl) we start a final descent towards Danilovgrad. The macadam road in this section is better.

After we go past another few picturesque, deserted dales and a lonely brick little house (27.5km, on the right from the road) we will reach, at the entrance to a charming weekend settlement called Studeno, the beginning of an asphalt road as well (28.5km, 1200masl).

The further we advance, our descent becomes increasingly attractive. The best section starts when, on the Brk hill (the Moustache), we get out of the forest, onto an



open area and onto the edge of a huge terrace, high above the vast Bjelopavlička ravnila (the Bjelopavlić Plain), in which Danilovgrad lies (36.9km, 790masl). There, at the beginning of the serpentine which lead to the valley, we will enjoy a splendid view of the town and the Zeta River which winds past it, on the left, over the Rumija Mountain which remains silent above the distant Skadar Lake, and straight ahead, over the rolling ocean of hills towards Cetinje, behind which the Lovćen Mountain and the crown of Orjen peek.

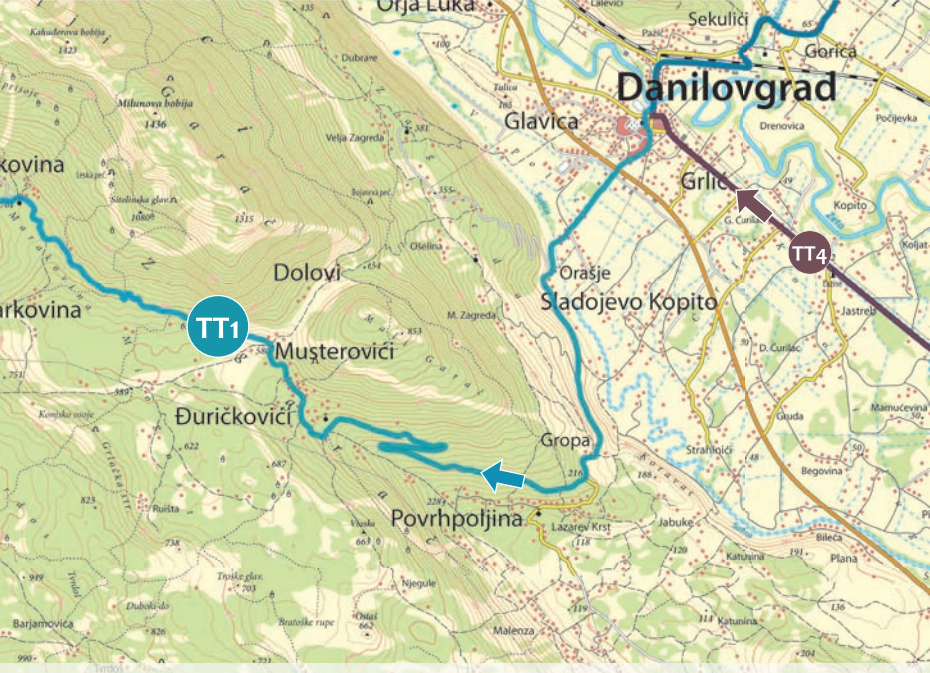
The road descends steeply down the serpentine, but – as a standard for such places – one should not, due to a thrill with the speed after a gruelling forest macadam road, forget about safety, about the sharp and blind bends on the edges of which there is often sand, and about the depth below a narrow asphalt road.

Anyway, we will reach Danilovgrad soon (52km after forking off the main road in the Moraca River Canyon, 55masl). The old facades, simple yet delicate architecture, lovely alleys, pubs and gardens in

this charming little town, with a population of 5,000 inhabitants, built at the end of the 19th century with the idea to be the royal capital of Montenegro, deserve that we make a pause there with pleasure. The greatest attraction in the surroundings of Danilovgrad is about 19km away Ostrog Monastery, the building of which, built into the rock face high above the valley, can be reached along a great new road. (We go past the turn for the monastery at about 3km before the centre of the town, that is to say 49km from the main road in the Moraca River Canyon.) The Ostrog Monastery is visited by people from all over the world, so it could be an excellent half-day detour for us as well.

7 DANILOVGRAD - ČEVO - CETINJE - LOVČEN - KRSTAC - KOTOR

From Danilovgrad we head to the southwest, along the road towards the Podgorica - Nikšić main road. We will just cross over the main road, and then we head to the Velji Ga-



rac Mountain (the Big Garac). That is the beginning of the ascent to Cevo, which will be 20km long (from 50 to 850masl). At the same time, it is also the beginning of the journey through so-called Stara Crna Gora (the Old Montenegro), that is to say Katunska nahija (the Katun District) – to Cetinje and Lovcen. A narrow road which leads there motorised tourists haven't discovered yet, and it offers an authentic atmosphere, without cars and traffic jam, even in peak season. However, among the bikers it is rather popular, so our chances to meet a colleague are considerable.

Riding around Velji Garac, we gain the elevation and slowly enter the karst labyrinth covered with low vegetation. On the "back" (the southern) side of the mountain, in the hamlet of Djurickovici, we go past a pub called Katunski vidikovac (The Katun Distict Vantage Point).

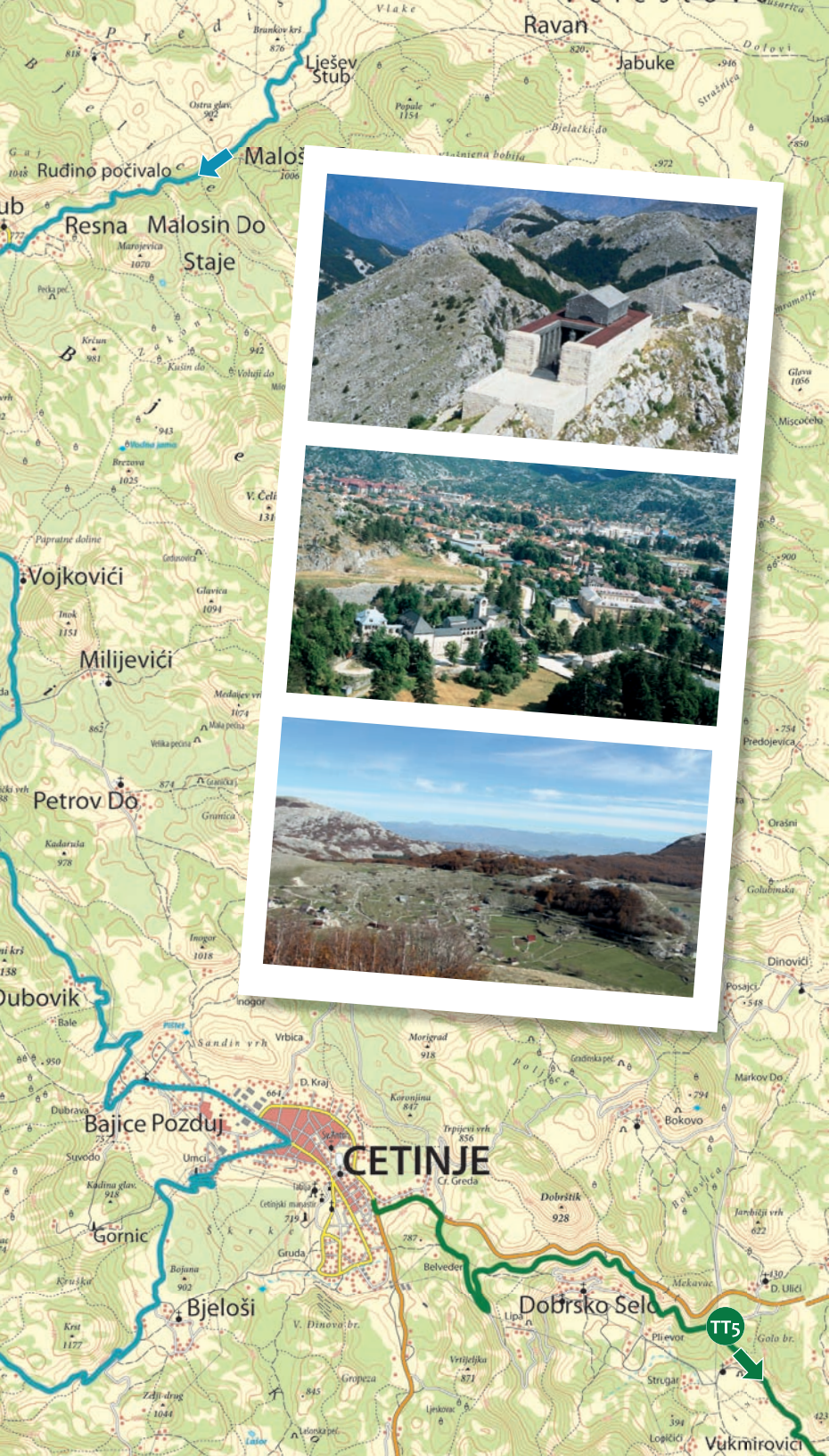
The road towards Cevo constantly winds amongst the hills, the lane is narrow and occasionally rather poor (yet decent for riding), it is often attacked and pressed from both sides with bushes, therefore

we will sooner hear than see the rather rare vehicles. The scent of Mediterranean somehow and from somewhere has already entered the nose, and we will often have an impression that we actually travel along an Adriatic island. There are many wonderful details in the landscape – sometimes it is a yellow teardrop of the cut grass by which the field enclosed by the stone walls is painted, at other times a lonely little house, the wooden doors and windows of which boldly bear its hardened years; sometimes it is a strange karst formation, and sometimes only the smell of wild grasses and flowers.

We end the ascent in the valley between the hills of Kopitnik and Lisac (22.5km from Danilovgrad). There are 4.3km from here to Cevo. In that little place (26.9km from Danilovgrad, 755masl) we turn to the south, continuing through the karst, waterless area in which rainwater from rainwater tanks is drunk. On a summer day it can be hot like an oven in here, so one should bring along enough water.

In terms of territory Cevo is the





largest village of Katunska nahija, and in the written sources it was first mentioned back in 1335. It was a centre of Ozrinici, one of the oldest Montenegrin clans, and after Cetinje, the second most important centre in nahija (district) - at the nearby Draskove stolice the decisions which significantly influenced Montenegrin history were made. Here the Montenegrin Queen Milena Petrovic-Njegos (1847-1923), the wife of King Nikola was born. After the king's death in 1921, Milena was nominally the last ruler of the Montenegrin kingdom. Her nephew was Janko Vukotic, a famous hero, serdar and general. Another famous native of Cevo was Dusan Vukotic, a director, caricaturist and professor, who in 1962 became the first Oscar awarded author of the animated film outside the USA. Cevo is lately rather depopulated and pretty much forgotten.

Cevo lies in a shallow dale amongst the hills, so from there we will go uphill again, this time about 6km and not so high - to 876masl. Before reaching Cetinje, there are two similar waves ahead of us, the latter being more serious: from Vuci do (13km from Cevo, 782masl) to Cekanje (19.6km from Cevo, 1015masl).

The road restlessly winds in the same way as on the section to Cevo. At Cekanje (The Waiting), a place of a wonderful name which awakens one's imagination (who has waited for whom there, and has he/she eventually turned up?), we reach the Cetinje-Kotor road and turn left, towards Cetinje. It is a downhill ride from here, so we will make some ten kilometres to that town rapidly.

To the right, over the hills, one goes to about 7km away village of Njegusi - if we have time and energy a detour to there will be worth the effort. The location of the village is marvellous; there are birthplaces of the ruler, bishop and poet Petar II Petrovic Njegos and the last Montenegrin King Nikola I Petrovic as well

as some fifteen churches with the walls of cut stone and a belfry „on a distaff “. But we will be delighted with the gastronomic jewels as well: famous prsuta (smoked pork ham-the recipe for a concentrated flavour of Montenegro: meat dried at the whirlwind of air streams from mountains and from the sea), cheese (once also sold in Trieste, Venice, Marseille and in Malta), and mead. A pub called Kod Pera na Bukovcu (At Pero's on Bukovica) - the entrance to Njegusi, from 1881, when the road as well was built, is the oldest one in Montenegro.

We reach Cetinje (660masl) at the 30th kilometre from Cevo. Cetinje is a classic example of the great in the small: in order to at least stroll past all the significant places in this little town-museum, with a population of around 12,000 inhabitants, we will need a good bit of a day. And not to even mention a purely hedonistic pleasure in a slow walk by the bike through the alleys of linden and white locust trees, past the yards and squeezed facades with mansards, balconies and balustrades, which will of course end with a ritual of watching a slow rhythm of the town, along with a cake and a coffee.

Founded in the 15th century, this centuries-old royal capital and religious centre of Montenegro, in the karst field below the Lovcen Mountain, has a great historical, cultural and religious significance. A result of the fateful connection with the history of the country, with its spirituality and statehood, is the fact that nearly every street and building here has a story or a legend related to it. An absolute must-see are the Cetinje Monastery (in which a hand of the Saint John the Baptist, a piece of the Holy Cross, relics of Sveti Petar Cetinjski (Saint Peter of Cetinje), and the Oktoih, a book printed in 1494, are kept), Vlaska crkva (the Vlachs Church) from 1450 (with a fence made of the captured enemy weapons), Biljarda (the for-

mer Njegos's residence from 1838; it was named after the first billiard table in Montenegro, brought here from Kotor, on the shoulders of the Montenegrin young men), a theatre called Zetski dom (the Zeta Home) and numerous museums. The old buildings of foreign embassies, grouped in a small space, and of various architectural styles, are a unique urban mosaic in Europe. The oldest Montenegrin libraries and the oldest books, the first bookshop (1879) as well as the outstanding printing tradition witness the role of the town in the development of enlightenment in this region. Although today Podgorica is the official capital of Montenegro, the title of the royal capital was given back to Cetinje.

The first football in Montenegro was brought to Cetinje, the first tennis club and the first golf club were founded in Cetinje in 1906. (Princess Milica was the patron of the latter, but it has not been recorded how successful it could have been played with so many bottomless pits and sinkholes in the karst field the golf ball could fall through). Nevertheless, to us probably the most interesting data will be the one that a cycling club in Cetinje was founded back in 1905.

The karst terrain around the town provides some characteristic attractions as well: a nearby Lipska pecina (the Lipska Cave) is one of the largest in the territory of the whole former Yugoslavia.

An inexhaustible natural resource of Cetinje is the oratorical skill: on big issues, as well as weather, prices, sports, joinery, motorbike repair or daily politics, most locals can discuss so irresistibly that it can easily happen to us to stay in the garden of a café much longer than we have intended, discussing or just listening to a new acquaintance of ours...

At the Central Library (the junction of Bulevar crnogorskih junaka (Mon-

tenegrin Heroes Boulevard) and Lovcenska ulica (Lovcen Street)) we head along Lovcenska Street to the southwest, towards Ivanova Korita. The traffic is weak out of season, but during the holidays, on weekends and in the summer peak season it can be heavier. The ascent through a lovely surroundings is slightly steeper in first kilometres (a great view of Cetinje also goes along with that), and later on it is moderate. At 5km from the junction by the library, we pass the ramp at the entrance to the Lovcen National Park. About 800m further ahead, in a wonderful beech forest, there is a lonely pub which is called, and how else, Pod bukvom (Under the Beech) – an excellent place for a pause.

Ivanova Korita (1250masl) is a popular picnic area with restaurants, hotels, adventure park. The spring it was named after is located 13km from Cetinje, on the left, by the road.

We continue towards Lovcen, through a picturesque landscape. After a short pause at Ivanova Korita, an asphalt road takes us upwards again, below the mass of the Stirovnik Summit (on the left), to the junction (15km from Cetinje, 1361masl), at which we will continue to the right, towards Jezerski vrh (the Lake Peak) on Lovcen. It is 3km away, and the ascent is not too difficult. We can reach a car park by bike (20km from Cetinje, 1575masl), and then, up the 461 steps and along a 80 metre long tunnel, we will arrive in front of the Njegos's Mausoleum (1657masl). The elevation gain in comparison with Cetinje is almost exactly 1,000m, and from here, in a clear morning, the coast of Italy can also be seen.

Lovcen is a symbol of Montenegrin identity and statehood, and therefore Njegos's wish was to be buried right there, in a little chapel which he built during his life (in 1845 or 1846). The story says that he chose Jezerski vrh in order not to immo-

holy Lovcen, the adjacent Stirovnik Summit, which is 81m taller. (In more recent times the modesty has given way to practicality so on the Stirovnik Summit the TV tower is located now.) The little chapel was knocked down by the Austrians during the occupation of Montenegro in the First World War (in 1916), who had planned to build a monument to their conquest of Lovcen in that place. The Njegos's remains were then transferred to the Cetinje Monastery, and in 1925 they were returned to the chapel rebuilt by King Alexander Karadjordjevic, a grandson of King Nikola Petrovic. That chapel was of the same form and size as the original one, and everything that remained of the original small chapel was also built in it. The very King Alexander was among those who carried the coffin with Njegos's bones in, and he laid down the Albanian Retreat Medal which he took off from his chest in it. After the Second World War that chapel as well was removed (in 1969), and instead of it, in the period from 1970 to 1974, a mausoleum in the Vienna – Secession Style, based on the plans of the sculptor Ivan Mestrovic, was built. During the construction around 11,000 tons of stone (some blocks are more than 40 tons in weight) was brought onto the Jezerski vrh Peak. The mausoleum is 37 metres long, 15 metres wide and around 11 metres high, and the Njegos's statue weighs 28 tons. It is visited by around 50,000 people a year and – it is the highest mausoleum in the world.

While in the empire of lightening we walk along a narrow paved umbilical cord towards the marble caryatides which guard the passage to the Njegos's sarcophagus, our road cruising through the Old Montenegro will get its full meaning here. The boiling, chaotic rock through which we have ridden from Danilovgrad sets and cools down while it grows into a lofty cone of Jezerski vrh Peak, a symbol on which history and legend meet, and which offers

us a resolution of an unclear sensation which we have previously had: that some kind of the final element has lacked, a key for better understanding of the wrinkled faces of highlanders, the stubborn houses in the wasteland, silent riders on the horses, an eternal Don Quixote-like struggling for grains in the waterless stone, scant and scathing words on one's own homeland which slip out of the mouth of a traveller in the battered old cars, and in contrast to them, longings of townspeople for those same heights. In Montenegro one who doesn't live on the rock craves to come back to it, to dust oneself with a dearly paid, callous freedom which crowns there, of which one becomes thirsty and the mouth hardens like the walls of the mausoleum on Lovcen. And the one who lives in the karst stone, craves to descend from there to the easier life, turning his back on some symbolic Lovcen of his with hope, and leaving oneself to an uncertain fall into the future. And that way, going round and round, on the waves of the rough sea, in which generations take turns, and families and clans rise and fall, Montenegro progresses through time, bad times, and history.

On return everything is “under foot”, that is to say downhill to us, so we will soon reach the junction before Ivanova Korita (5.2km from the car park on Jezerski vrh Peak, 1300masl), at which we turn right, onto a narrow asphalt road which descends to the area called Dolovi. One of the most beautiful legs on the TT1 Route is ahead of us, during which we will pass below the southwestern slope of Stirovnik, find ourselves high above the Bay of Boka Kotorska, and then descend to the seaside.

At 6.4km from the car park (1300masl) we leave the asphalt road and turn right and uphill, onto a macadam road which immediately takes us onto the edge of a huge Branjevina cliff. Since we will ride

along the edge for a while, we certainly won't lack exquisite views - both of Boka Kotorska, and Stirovnik on our right side. The ascent ends about 2km after the beginning of the macadam road, and from the 3rd kilometre the road becomes poorer. Nevertheless, just a kilometer further ahead (10.8km from the car park, 1336masl) we again reach an asphalt road which leads to the Krstac mountain pass and to Boka Kotorska, and which straight away thrills us with a couple of wonderful bends.

In the fireworks of vantage points we come across, the best, however, could be that at 11.6km (1280masl). To reach it one should walk to the left, some hundred metres from the road, and an entire amazing panorama of Boka Kotorska, along with Kotor and Vrmac Hill wall which separates it from the Adriatic, will open to us. If, in addition to that, lazy white cumulus clouds also play around on the sky and down on the water, and on the rugged relief knit the play of light and shadows, it is easy to spend here a couple of stunned and spellbound hours. A place only some three hundred metres away is also magnificent - below the road there are also a wooden bench and a table - the right place for a pause

and a heavenly lunch.

THE VIEW, THE VIEW...

Nevertheless, for the absolutely best of the best view on this section one has to try a little bit harder and hike: at 12.8km from the car park, on the right from the road, a steep trail branches off, leading to the abandoned village of Bizaljevac, located as if on the palm in a short and very beautiful valley nestled below Lovcen and Stirovnik. Above the village (the stone houses of which themselves are a reason good enough to come here), on the west side a long and bare hill called Gomile, covered only with sharp grass and occasional bush, rises. One can climb the hill without major problems, although there is no trail leading to it. And slightly before the very summit there is a spot from which that best of the best view of Boka Kotorska appears. It takes around two hours to make this detour, and we recommend it heartily.

Before reaching the Krstac pass we still have a little bit of a pure enjoyment ahead of us - and we should try to make kilometres to there last as long as possible. On the mountain pass (16.8km from





the car park on Jezerski vrh Peak, goomasl), we join the Cetinje - Kotor road, constructed in the time of Montenegrin King Nikola (a part of it was constructed by the Austrians as well). And as if there hasn't already been enough excitement, we will let it take us in a crazy fall down Lovcenske strane (the slopes of Lovcen), to the blueness of Boka Kotorska and towards Kotor.

The traffic on the road is moderate, but the road is narrow, there are many sharp and hairpin bends, the tourists, motorcyclists, busses of the travel agencies... love to drive this way, therefore one should in no case be overwhelmed by speed without caution. A slower ride will after all give us an opportunity to fully absorb the space and depth which explode extremely loudly at every serpentine.

And there are 25 serpentines in total, so densely glued next to each other as if there was no more space in Montenegro. Each of them tells its own story, each of them in its own way creates the perspectives and changes a view angle at a titanic plunging of the Balkans into the Adriatic. Some people say that the best is the twentieth, but probably everyone will have their own taste and preference. Those who love finding symbols, in the lower section of the serpentines, before the place called Trojica, see the M letter, which has inspired a story that it is a dedication of the road project engineer, Josip Slade, to the Montenegrin Princess Milena, who captivated him (be this a truth or not, at the time a relevant Austrian commission, instead of such an elegant expression of admiration, noticed only that the project of the road was complicated and expensi-



ve, and therefore Slade was fired). At Trojica we find a monastery and a fortress, and a new inspiration for admiring the Bay of Boka Kotorska. And in a minute there we are in Kotor as well – after all “high” adventures in the previous days, it is a little bit strange to meet the sea again. From the beginning of the descent after Dolovi we have passed 31km, and the elevation loss has been 1420m.

8

KOTOR - PERAST - DONJI MORINJ - BAKOČI - HERCEG NOVI

KOTOR

On history and architecture of this town composed of stone, one of the best preserved medieval pearls of the Mediterranean, a home of

famous seafarers and merchants, inscribed onto the UNESCO World Heritage List as well, one can say so much that on this limited space we won't even try to venture into something like that. Instead, we will recommend you to wander, without a plan, a map or a guide along the network of its narrow streets and squares. Listen attentively for a while the ramparts which protect it from the sea, and in which the vibrations formed after the horrible earthquakes which repeatedly destroyed it eternally quiver, emerge before its palaces, churches and bell-towers of which you don't know names and histories, sneak up the steps and fences to the stone of which you don't need to know the origin. And only when you feel that you have seen enough, head to a tour “by the book”, reading, learning and memorising the formal



details, arranging them on the top of the real knowledge which you have already acquired – and which is summed up in the statement that Kotor is magical.

Leaving Kotor, we head from the sea front, before the main town door (“the Door of the Sea”). The trip plan is now simple and clear: along the coast of Boka Kotorska, down the rosary of little towns and little villages. There are no ascents or descents, mountain passes, macadam roads, dense forests and remote corners, just well-beaten paths and easy itinerary in this most developed region of Montenegro in terms of tourism. Will it feel good? After mountains and frequent solitude, after poor roads and difficult ascents, a relaxed rolling from beach to beach, with a little bit of whistling on the bike, good food and a night out... are not a bad combination.

One should however prepare oneself for a fact that during the season there is a jam in Boka Kotorska and the road along the coast is overloaded with vehicles. The best and the most pleasant time for a ride is early

in the morning.

Along the northern coast of the Bay of Kotor, after 13,5km we reach Perast, a little baroque town of the magnificent palaces. Slightly after it we will find ourselves at the shortest distance from the islands of Sveti Djordje (Saint George) and Gospa od Skrpjela (Our Lady of the Rocks) - note that there are nine islands in Boka - so there's an opportunity to take a better look at them since they are the main decoration of almost every view in Boka.

BOKA KOTORSKA

So many things exist in Boka and so many things fit into it, that it is hard to believe that the length of the bay, from the entrance at Prevlaka to Kotor, is only 28km, while the length of the coastline is only 105km. Even the maximum depth by some miracle is not 11 km but 60 metres. The bay is surrounded with the Dinaric verticals the height of which reaches 1895 m (Orjen).

Apart from this less interesting data, this is one of the most beautiful fjords in the world (and the

southernmost as well), unique in the Mediterranean, a happy combination of the natural blessing and a man-made heritage, a shiny brooch on the coast of the Adriatic Sea. However, seemingly well known and gentle, Boka Kotorska still goes beyond human experience and lives its own secret, primordial life which neither the everyday destinies of its inhabitants nor the ambitions of tourists, ships, automobiles... touch. In its sea there is depth under the depth, on its islets there is more land than the maps show, and when we pass along its shores that somehow is never definitive – it always seems to us that there is something left that we haven't reached, although we have tried really hard. Why is that so? Probably because the true beauty always stays beyond the ultimate reach, and leaves only the longing. That longing will always draw us to come back to Boka Kotorska again...

We enter the Risan arm of the bay and on its top (at 17km from Kotor) reach the little town of Risan, which is considered to be the oldest one in Boka (it was founded in the 3rd century BC). From Risan we

ride another five and a half kilometres before we reach the junction in the village of Donji Moringj (23km from Kotor), from which we will head to hills once again, along the short cut towards Herceg Novi.

With this little counterpoint (maybe it would be more precise to say: crescendo) in comparison with the pleasant road along the sea, we come back to the style of the previous journey along the TT1 Route. And it is only right to, in such a manner, with the last jump into the greenery above Boka Kotorska and a decent goodbye sweating, end our exploration of the Montenegrin heights and at the same time convince ourselves of that how much during the previous days our fitness improved and our understanding of the term “steep” changed.

Immediately after branching off the main road along the coast, in Donji Moringj we pass near a wonderful little Orthodox church (the Saint Sava Church), built in the coastal style. Note that there are as many as five Orthodox and four Catholic churches in the village. Nevertheless, the locals equally visit both the





Orthodox and the Catholic, the saints of both churches are celebrated (the Catholics of Morinj celebrate slava (a home patron saint festival)) as well, and just how much the two faiths are mutually respected and honoured is also demonstrated by the fact that the orientation of the Saint Tryphon Church, the oldest Catholic church in this little place, corresponds to orientation of an Orthodox church: indeed, it originally was the Orthodox, dedicated to the Holy Martyr Varnava, but since the Catholics in Morinj did not have their temple this one was given to them.

The name Morinj, according to some, comes from the fact that the place is situated by the sea (more), but the more probable version is the one that its origin dates back to the Middle Ages, to the dark period of plague in Europe, which did not miss this region either. Morinj, which until the epidemic was more populated than Kotor, obviously was most severely struck and it kept its name as a remainder of that time when many people died in it

(“pomor” (pestilence), “moriti” (to kill)). According to a legend the village was saved by bringing the icon of the Most Holy Mother of God from the Saint John Church to the nearby water spring called Svrčak, blessing of holy water and praying. In respect and gratitude the natives of Morinj still take out that same icon on the day when the salutary healing took place (on 15th July). But with that the legend related to the miraculous icon hasn’t yet been finished... In the Communist time, after the Second World War, they were banned from taking it out of the churchyard. But when in 2003 all of a sudden seven people passed away in the village, the religious procession was resumed and well – dying returned to „normal“ and until the end of that year no one passed away.

The asphalt road ends in the village and a very steep, difficult ascent along a concrete path starts. At 1.8km from the main road one should turn around: an exceptionally beautiful view of Gospa od Skrpjela appears. We

pass the scattered Gornji Morinj, and at the beginning of the 3rd kilometre, by the Saint Tom Church (409masl), the concrete is replaced by a decent macadam road. A little further ahead (3.9km from the main road) we come across an eco-village called the Stone Village (Kameno selo), after which the road becomes poorer, and the ascent is very demanding again.

The area is already completely deserted here, we progress through dense, low vegetation, occasionally passing through the real green tunnels. A steep concrete (this time a poor one) replaces the macadam road again at 4.4km from the main road, but not for long: from a little pass on the hill called Gorilovo brdo (5.2km, 505masl) we are on macadam road again. From there the ascent is somewhat easier. On the right, above the rolling hills along which we wander, the mighty limestone cliffs of Snježnica and Mrcava greda rise. The impression of remoteness from the world doesn't lack here, and occasionally we will ask ourselves if we really a short time ago went past some beaches and cafes, along a pleasant coast. And when we convince ourselves that we did, and that the same thing awaits us at the end of this journey, we will be able to dedicate ourselves with a smile to further slow pedalling.

The road is very good here, later towards the little village of Bakoci partially cracked by water, but for a bicycle a band of the good road surface will always be found. The forest is dense, and there is not much to be seen, therefore it's only left to us to find a pleasure in that ... there is not much to be seen. After all, let the impressions from the TT1 Route settle down in peace for a while.

The highest point on this section - 625masl - is reached at 6.9km from the main road, after the village of

Bakoci (a couple of little houses by the road). The ratio of the elevation and the mileage shows how strenuous the ascending has been, but from here to Herceg Novi we will constantly descend (with only one short exception). Well, we have surely deserved it.

A kilometre further ahead (7.9km from the main road, 520masl) there is again a good concrete for us, so our landing in Herceg Novi will be speeded up. Some hundred metres before this place we go past an interesting little chapel, placed in some kind of a metal tank.

At 8.9km and 430masl there is a good place for a pause: on the left, below the road, a hunters cabin in a nice shade, with the Brestovnik spring and benches, smiles at us, and another two benches with an excellent view of the town below us and Prevlaka, the distant doors of Boka Kotorska, readily wait by the very road.

The downhill section slowly becomes less steep while below the Krs Orovica we ride through a green, uncombed jungle, past the neglected olive groves. From the end of the tenth kilometre (255masl) we ride along a narrow asphalt road, winding between the yards and peeping over the fences into the other people's lives and other people's days - the voyeurism is always irresistibly entertaining. When we pass the cemetery and a lovely little Saint Srdjan Church (on our left), we will join the road to Trebinje (13.7km, 200masl) and descend along it to the centre of Herceg Novi (18.2km from Morinj) in a minute.

And there we are again in the place from which some ten years ago we set off on our adventure. Was it so long ago? Yes, it was - or at least it seems so, when we try to evoke memory of all impressions and adventures from the TT1 Route.

INFORMATION

In case you choose to take this trail, you will pass through several municipalities in Montenegro. You will have different opportunities for overnight stays, from hotels and motels, ethno villages and private accommodation, to camping sites and mountain huts. There are numerous options, so we recommend you get in touch with local tourism organizations in municipalities you find yourself in, and they will assist you in finding what suits your needs. Tourism organizations are service oriented, and they can help you with any other information, such as where you could repair your bike, what attractions you should visit in your vicinity, where you could taste dishes that represent national cuisine, etc.

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