

ON THE ZAVRATEC PLATEAU ... A PREHISTORIC TRAIL IN THE VICINITY OF GODOVIČ

16

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The Zavratac-Godovič area with its softly undulating hills unites Gorenjsko, Notranjsko and Primorsko. From a wide ridge, a visitor looks for the last time at the white alpine peaks. To the south, the Logatec-Postojna plain meets the vast Dinaric forests.





The rovtar village of **Zavratec** is located between the folds of the softly undulating karstic plateau above the Sovra, surrounded by torrential ravines. It is located along the old freight route from Primorsko to the interior and Gorenjsko. Lined with fertile land, it was a suitable place for permanent settlement. The traveller's eye stops at traditional farms with artfully carved portals and rural frescoes, and indulges in views across the Pre-Alpine hills to the Julian Alps with Triglav, the Karavanke and the Kamnik-Savinja Alps.





Multi-coloured conglomerate

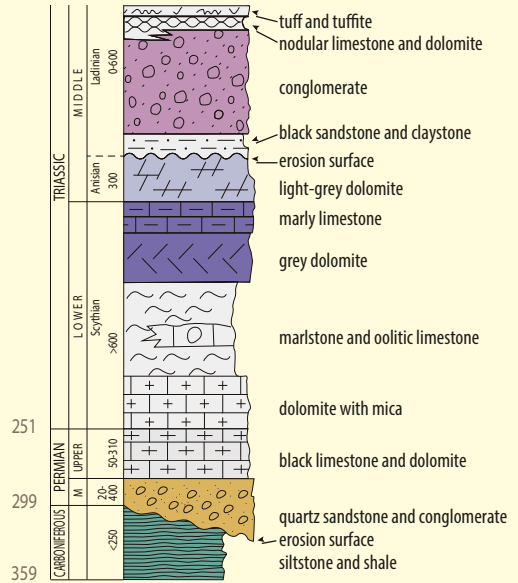
Due to tectonic shifts in the geological past, the Zavratac area is built of a variety of old and interesting rocks.

The oldest rocks, **black shale claystone** from the Carboniferous Period (340 million years old) and the **yellowish-reddish quartz conglomerate** and **sandstone** from the Middle Permian (273-259 million years old), can be seen along the road from Mravljisce to Zavratac. Further on, towards Zgornji Zavratac, we notice a rock composed of differently colored pebbles. This is a **multi-coloured conglomerate** that appears on the surface along the road through Spodnji Zavratac and on the meadows between Idrija and Rovte, as well as in many road cuts between Kovačev Rovt and Dole. It was formed during the Upper Anisian and Ladinian periods (244-238 million years). At that time, this area was cut with many faults. Some parts of the surface were raised and land was formed. From these parts, streams and rivers carried gravel to the lower lying basins, where a conglomerate of rocks formed over millions of years.

Beneath the conglomerate lie older **grey dolomite** from the Anisian period (247-244 million years) and **layered, dark grey, marly limestone** of the Scythian age (250-247 million years). These rocks can be seen along the road from Zg. to Sp. Zavratac. The area above the Sovra valley consists of **light grey, non-layered, karstic limestone** from the Ladinian period. (237 million years ago).

Age of rocks in millions of years
System
Series
Stage
Bed thickness (m)

Rock Column of the Zavratac Region



Beneath the Mravljisce farm there is a swampy meadow, where the already famous Idrija mining doctor Joannes Antonius Scopoli botanized. Here he discovered a special fern - adder's-tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*). After 250 years, this modest plant still thrives there to this today.



The adder's tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*)



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Zavratac Plateau

Zavratac

Starting point: Zavratac

Length: 16.5 km

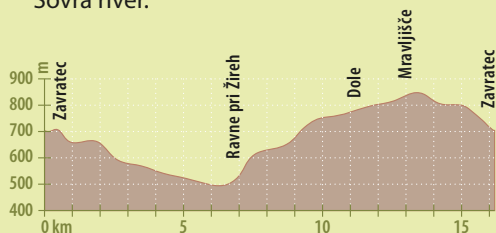
Altitude difference: 352.3 m

Cycling time: 2 h

Difficulty: demanding

The trail through the rolling landscape of the Zavratac plateau reveals the archaeological antiquity and creativity of nature and man. The war monuments along its way testify to the cruel events of the 19th century.

There are quite a few ascents and descents along the way, so we recommend it for enduring cyclists. You can select and view individual points. Bezjak's waterfall and Tomaž's table are accessible by foot, Matjaž's chambers are difficult to access, but they are visible from afar, across the Sovra river.



1 Church of St. Ulrich

The baroque Church of St. Ulrich, surrounded by church walls, is perched on a hill SE of Zavratac and bears the venerable year 1647. It was first officially mentioned in the land register of the Loka lordship, dating from 1501. It consists of a triangular presbytery, a wider rectangular nave and a bell tower to the west. The interior of the nave and the presbytery are decorated with baroque frescoes from 1713.





2 Pr'Možinat Granary

This granary is also one of the homesteads that, in addition to Rupnik's old house and Slabe's house, preserves old **rural frescoes**. The granary has a stone, rectangular portal with the year 1678, a restored exterior with frescoes on the façade and an interior with a smoke kitchen and a pottery stove in the room. It stores a remarkable array of house inventory.



In addition to the granary, the owners also renovated the fruit drying room or *pajštva*.



3 Bezjak's Waterfall

A good 4 m high, Bezjak's waterfall is in the Črna valley. Next to it are the visible ruins of a former house with a mill, which was first mentioned in the land registers in 1586. It was probably named after its owner, Jurij Bezjak. Due to new routes and its inaccessibility, the mill had less and less work after World War I. The miller's family borrowed heavily and the estate was sold off. The building was set on fire by villains. In 1933, the then owner Franc Rupnik died, and the mill was left to decay.



Bezjak's waterfall is accessible from two directions: from Zavratac, from where it can be reached in half an hour of easy walking. The other direction is from Podklanec, where the path crosses the Črna stream five times. We recommend good footwear and extreme caution to be taken.

4 Matjaž's Chambers Cave

Just a stone's throw away from the confluence of the Sovra and the Rovitarska Sora, there is a picturesque rock wall with six entrances to Matjaž's chambers. Archaeologists discovered that they were inhabited in two periods. First, in the Early Paleolithic in the early Stone Age, when Neanderthals used them as an outpost. From this period they found the remains of a cave bear, which had its lair there, the bones of bison, elk and deer - the remains of Neanderthal prey. Younger finds from about 10,000 years ago testify that the caves were again used by the ancestors of modern man as a temporary hunting outpost. In addition to the remains of two hearths and tools, they also found stone chippings, indicating that man made tools here. They also found alpine marmot, beaver and deer bones.



Matjaž's chambers

6 Tomož's Table

Near Ravne pri Žireh, a large, naturally shaped stone table is hidden in the forest of Buhčeve rupe. The stone slab is completely independent and is "laid" on the pillar so precisely that it contacts the base at almost only one point. Its formation is the result of numerous geological coincidences which started 240 million years ago, beginning with the deposition of limestone mud with intermediate deposits of clay from the land due to numerous storms. Thus, two layers of limestone, which was later transformed into dolomite, and an intermediate layer of claystone were formed. The process of dolomitization has caused the lower layer to be less resistant and the upper to be more resistant to external influences. In later geological periods, its shape was determined by tectonic shifts with faults in different directions. Covered with other layers, it waited for tectonic forces to lift it to the surface. Its final shape was determined by atmospheric influences via dissolution and erosion.

5 Memorial to the Victims of World War II

The monument stands on the site where 16 soldiers lost their lives on 15 December 1943.



7 Italian Occupation and the Rapallo Border

After the Rapallo border was mapped between the two wars, Zavratac found itself almost at the border, where, as elsewhere, "smuggling" flourished. The Italian occupation meant that the army, the financial guard and the border militia also came to the village. The Italians, however, left behind something useful: the road from Mravljšiče to Zgornji Zavratac, a water catchment and a village water reservoir, which remained in common use during drought periods until 1965, and a school building where classes are still held today.



The area around the water catchment from the times of Italian occupation (you can see it in the background of the photo) was transformed by the locals into a common area for socializing and holding events years ago. At the rest spot, where drinking water is also available to travellers, an information board guides you where to go to next.



TIPS FOR RESEARCH

Hrečevc and "little" Hrečevc (825 m)

At the Bevk homestead, you step on the cart track which takes you to the edge of the Dole plateau after one kilometer of trail. Then step through the thicket to the edge of the cliff, which hides the source of the Črna and its underwater siphon, roughly 80 meters below the rock wall. From the "little" Hrečevc nearby, a magnificent view opens up over the Črna valley towards Žirovski vrh and Vrh Svetih Treh Kraljev.

Liberator B-24

During World War II, squadrons of Allied bombers often flew over Slovenian skies. This flight path was particularly intense in the second half of 1944, when Allied air forces intensively bombed crude oil refineries, synthetic fuel production plants and fuel depots which supplied the German war machine with fuel and lubricants.

On the fateful day of December 16, 1944, the 15th Air Force flew to targets in Germany with 600 B-17 and B-24 bombers. Among them was also a bomber with the number 42-51922, which was flying towards Brūx (today Most in the Czech Republic). Its crew was assembled from 11 members, all assigned from different crews. The planes, which took off from Torretta Airport in southern Italy, had 9 hours of flying in both directions ahead



The Črna Stream

of them. The attack took place without any incidents, as the day was cloudy and they managed to avoid the flak and anti-aircraft grenades almost entirely. The only plane hit above the target was the plane that later ended its journey near Dole. In the German counterattack, the fuel tank was hit in several places. The leaks were too great and after the flight over the Alps, all the engines on the plane stopped.

All 11 crew members managed to jump out before the plane crashed. They lived to see the end of the war in captivity, but returned home safely after the war was over.



The purple cyclamen (*Cyclamen purpurascens*)



The orange lily (*Lilium bulbiferum*)



In 2014, members of the Aeroklub Srebrna krila Idrija and the Municipality of Idrija erected a monument at the crash site. Parts of the plane were donated by collectors to the Military Museum in Pivka, where they are still on display today.





- | | |
|--|--|
| Dolomite (Norian – Rhaetian) | Municipality of Idrja |
| Bituminous Limestone (Lower Cretaceous) | Border |
| | Fault |





- | | | | |
|---|-----------------------------|---|----------------------|
|  | View point |  | Natural Heritage |
|  | Inn |  | Cultural Heritage |
|  | Lodging |  | Wartime Heritage |
|  | Tourist Farm with Lodging |  | Museum Collection |
|  | Camping, Campsite, Glamping |  | Memorial Plaque |
|  | Picnic Spot |  | Church |
|  | Swimming Spot |  | Feldban Hiking Trail |
|  | Cycling Trail |  | Hiking Trail |

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Godovič – paths into prehistory

The village of **Godovič** lies between fields and meadows lined with forests. The area stretches at the watershed between the Adriatic and the Black Sea, at the far end of the NE Notranjsko podolje valley, between Jelenšek and the Črni Vrh plateau. It has always been a natural crossing between the Vipava region and Gorenjsko, between the Tolmin and Logatec area. Here, coachmen and travellers stopped and the town is still an important hub. 725 inhabitants live on an area of 15.1 km², with an average altitude of 595 m. In the center of the settlement lies the church of St. Urban, a shop and a branch school with a kindergarten unit. Due to its proximity to the main Slovenian road network, the settlement is expanding rapidly.

Starting point: Center of Godovič (Info board at the parking lot at the cemetery)

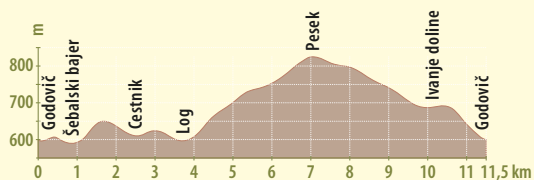
Length: 11.5 km

Altitude difference: 220 m

Cycling time: 1 h 30 min

Difficulty: demanding

Traces of dinosaur footprints and remains from the World War I will reveal their story along a varied path in the vicinity of Godovič. You will also witness the playful creativity of nature. On Jelenšek, you can try to find the remains of a prehistoric settlement. You can see the sights by bike or on foot. Only the route from Godovič, via Jelenšek to Pesek can be managed on foot.



Godovič area is interesting from a tectonics point of view, as it is divided in half by the famous **Idrinja fault**. It runs from Log, across the meadows, behind the church of St. Urban and further along the road towards Hotedršica. On the SW side it is bordered by the Zala fault, which crosses the main road at Cestnik, and continues towards Šebalski vrh and Novi Svet.

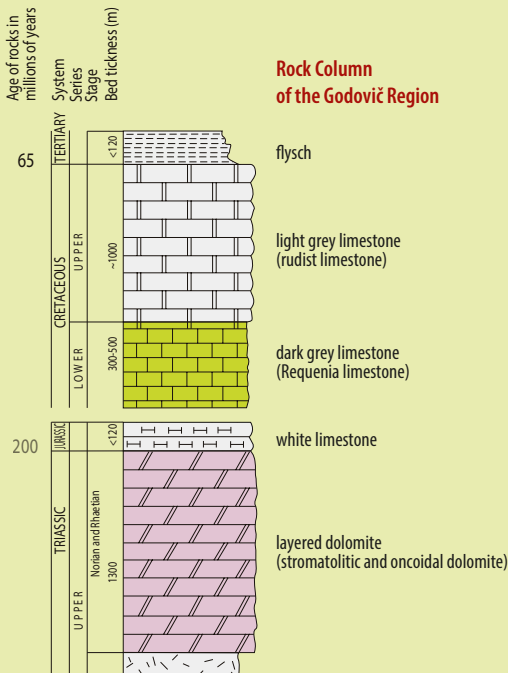
At both faults, the rocks are cut and displaced (see the geological map). The area between the faults from Log to Šebalk is composed of **layered dolomite** (i.e. the "main dolomite"), of the Upper Triassic age (227–201 million years). It is also found on the meadows on the right side of the road towards Log, Ivanje Doline and Pesek, where dinosaur footprints are visible. The main dolomite is thrust upon the **dark grey bituminous limestone** of the Lower Cretaceous age (145–100 million years), in which many karst phenomena took place. At the faults and the thrust, the dolomite is crushed and impermeable, which caused the swampy areas at the roundabout and the formation of the Šebalski bajer pond.



The European scopolia (*Scopolia carniolica*)



The European badger (*Meles meles*)



Flora And Fauna



The mixing of many natural phenomena (climate, geology and geography) creates special conditions that allow for the coexistence of plants that are not found together elsewhere. The impermeability of the rocks in the crushed zone along the thrust forms swampy meadows. In spring, sunny slopes are covered in fragrant hellebores, which are becoming rarer due to amelioration. On the nearby meadows, autumn lady's-tresses grow. Typical beech-fir forest vegetation is represented by black hellebores, blue-eyed-Mary, Hacquetia, European scopolia and other flowering plants, ferns, seed plants, mosses, lichens and fungi. In the humus-rich woods, *Corydalis* is very common. The Dinaric-Karst forests give shelter to deer, fox, badger, marten, hare, dormice, smaller hazel dormice and squirrels. The buzzard is common, while sparrowhawks and goshawks are rare and the tawny owl is more common, while the Ural owl and the Tengmalm's owl are less common.



The church boasts colourful stained glass by Marko Jerman, a stained glass master and a Slovene by birth, born beneath the shadows of the Argentinian Andes, who now lives and works in Godovič.

1 Church of St. Urban

In the heart of the village rises the parish church of St. Urban (Pope the Martyr), first mentioned in 1526. The present church was built in 1656 and has three altars. As early as 1685, the church was extended and thoroughly renovated. Throughout history it has been affected by several disasters. In 1737, it burned down in a fire that destroyed the whole village. Again, the church and all the parish inventory, and all the books were destroyed by a fire in 1749. The villagers rebuilt the church, but later the bell tower collapsed killing several workers. The church got its present form in 1756. During World War II, only the bell tower was destroyed. It was then rebuilt in a slightly reduced and simpler form. At the behest of the parishioners, the bell tower was restored to its original shape in 2018.



In the cemetery next to the church of St. Urban stands a solitary obelisk. It was erected in memory of World War I victims, both domestic and foreign, who ended their young lives here in its hinterland. With his silent speech, it reminds us of the cruelty of war.



2 Šebalski bajer pond or the Godoviški bajer pond

Šebalski or the Godoviški bajer pond is an artificially dammed pond that serves as a swimming spot. It lies hidden in a swampy valley SW of the village near Šebalk. The locals have arranged a pleasant recreational space there. It is suitable for swimming in the summer, and occasionally serves as a venue for summer social events.

Wet Meadow near the Pond



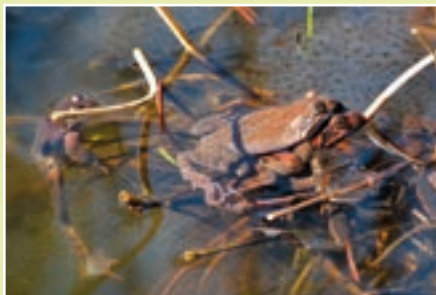
Above the dam, there are natural wet meadows, where interesting and rare plants grow. 65 plant species are recorded here. Of these, five are on the red list and ten are protected. The marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), a species of orchid, blooms in a very rare white and not pink hue. The fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*) is one of our most endangered orchids. The stream with clean water is home to many aquatic invertebrates. Common frogs (*Rana temporaria*) spawn next to the pond.



The marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*)



The fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*)



The common frog (*Rana temporaria*)

3 Remains of the Alpine wall fortification system

At the end of the 1920s, Italy began building an Alpine wall defense system along all its borders. It also protected the "Godovič crossing" with a system of fortifications, but it never served its purpose. Abandoned buildings at Cestnik's bend, Šebalk, Ivanje doline and Medvedje Brdo are attractive for researchers and scientists. We follow them to Zavratac. The same can be found at Črni Vrh, Zadlog, Podroteja, Idrija and Sp. Idrija.

Remains of the Alpine wall fortification system.



On the way to an unfinished tunnel built during World War I.



4 Unfinished 1917 railway tunnel

Near the village there are two railway tunnels, built during the World War I as part of the Logatec-Črni Vrh railway connection, which would supply the Austro-Hungarian troops on the Isonzo front. The shorter one (160 m) is open for traffic in the direction of Črni Vrh; the 400-meter long one remained unfinished in the woods and is hidden from view. The tunnel, a real technical landmark, reveals the principle of architecture and the method for building tunnels. Its construction was suspended due to the breakthrough of the front near Kobarid, October 24, 1917.



WARNING! There is a risk of material falling off the ceiling in the tunnel. Viewing is at your own risk!

5 Magnificent Yew near Cestnik

Yew (*Taxus baccata*) of exceptional size and age grows near Cestnik's house. Yew is one of the four protected woody plants in Slovenia. A slow-growing conifer reaching the highest age among trees. Its wood is hard, but elastic, and it has been used since the Stone Age to make weapons, especially bows. In ancient times, yew was worshipped as a sacred tree. These exceptional properties and the usefulness of the wood make it highly endangered and in need of protection. All parts of the yew, except for the epicarp of the berry, are poisonous to man. The red berries are dangerous to small children who put everything in their mouths. Interestingly, the seeds are not toxic to birds, as their digestion is different and they excrete the seeds intact. Thus, birds spread yew seeds in the wild.



6 Snake Branch Spruce



Between Cestnik's house and the hamlet of Log, above the Pr' Cenc farm, grows an exceptional natural feature of Godovič – a **snake branch spruce** (*Picea abies*). Its shape is caused by a specific

genetic hereditary design. This type of spruce is characterized by the snake-shaped long branches that grow irregularly from the trunk in all directions. Branches that droop have almost no side shoots.

The original Godovič snake branch spruce, one of the four growing spruces of this type in Slovenia, was severely damaged in 2014 and finally destroyed by a storm in 2017. Today, it is possible to see its shoot, which was planted near the original site after its destruction.

7 Dinosaur Footprints

220 million years ago, a **bipedal reptile** (a precursor of dinosaurs) roamed the coast near the equator, leaving footprints in the soft mud, which were suddenly covered by other sediments in a storm. These sediments slowly turned into rock, tectonic forces lifted them up and "brought" them to our area. Surface processes of erosion and dissolution have made six footprints visible on the surface today - near the Pesek farm, above Godovič.



It is impossible to deduce the footprints' owner. We only know that it was a bipedal dinosaur or one of its bipedal predecessors. You can see one of the possible 'culprits' in the Geopark Visitor Centre at the exhibition "Written in rocks" in Idrija.



EXCURSION TIP

A well-kept part of the feldban, from Cestnik's bend along the French road through the Strug gorge to Wild Lake and Idrija is suitable for hiking.

Feldban

During World War I (from July 1916 to October 1917), the military narrow-gauge railway, the 'Feldbahn', supplied the Austro-Hungarian army on the Isonzo front.

The main section ran from Logatec to Godovič, where one track branched off towards Trnovski gozd and the other towards Idrija and Trebuša. In 1916, Godovič was an important military center with a military command, a hospital, an assembly point for prisoners of war, a loading/unloading station, a petrol station, etc. Many of the wooden buildings have not been preserved.

Jelenšek – An Archeological Site

The Jelenšek hill (817 m) above Godovič was inhabited as early as the Iron Age, as evidenced by rich archaeological finds more than 2,500 years. Its strategic location allows control on all four sides. The soldiers of the eastern flank of the Sveta Lucija (Most na Soči) territory were supposed to have their posts here. 270 iron and bronze artefacts were found in the excavated graves, mostly the remains of various weapons. Today, the terrain is overgrown and only the eye of an archaeologist can detect the outlines of the remains of this ancient culture.



COLLECTIONS AND HOMESTEADS

Pr'Možinat Granary

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SPORTS ACTIVITIES

Bajer summer swimming spot



TRADITIONAL events

GODOVIČ:

- Kramp Fest (May)
- Midsummer Night (in June)

ZAVRATEC:

- Urlich's Sunday (in July)

ZAVRATEC and GODOVIČ Area

Area: 40,9 km²

Highest point: 871 m

Lowest point: 442 m

Settlements: Zavratec, Godovič, Dole, Potok, Medvedje Brdo, Ravne pri Žireh, Podklanec

Main rocks: limestone, dolomite, conglomerate

Rivers and streams: the Zala, the Sovra, the Ljubevščica, the Črna, the Raskavec

Main forest association: Dinaric fir-beech forest (*Abieti-Fagetum dinaricum*)

Botanical specialty: the marsh helleborine (*Epipactis palustris*), the fen orchid (*Liparis loeselii*), adder's tongue (*Ophioglossum vulgatum*)

Viewing peaks: Hrečevc (825 m), Medvedje Brdo (814 m)



ZAVRATEC



GODOVIČ



The diverse Zavratec–Godovič area is at the crossroads between Primorsko, Gorenjsko and Notranjsko, with altitudes between 500–800 m. It consists of two micro-regions, namely the Godovič podolje valley, which is part of the Notranjsko podolje valley and the Zavratec plateau, which is part of the Rovtarsko hribovje hills. The famous watershed between the Adriatic and the Black Sea basins runs through the area.

Godovič has roads connected with Ajdovščina, Idrija and Logatec. Zavratec is accessible from Idrija via Dole or Godovič and from the Sora valley between Žiri and Rovte.

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