

# Slovenia

Discover Some of Europe's Finest Trout Waters



Guide Rok Luštrik with a marble trout

**By Kirsten Gardner**

After a nearly 20-year hiatus, Frontiers is pleased to re-introduce Slovenia as one of Europe's premier fly fishing destinations. This petite central European nation (roughly the size of Connecticut) is blessed with an incredibly high concentration of quality water, from technique-testing chalk streams to gin-clear alpine rivers, including the mighty Soča River and its tributaries.

Fish for trophy-sized brown, rainbow and brook trout; two species of grayling; the storied marble trout, and the hulking hucho hucho (or Danubian salmon) available only to seasoned anglers from December through early February. With the country's compact size, quality fishing is never more than an hour's drive from accommodations in northwest or central Slovenia.

This May I spent three days fishing Slovenia's alpine rivers in the northwest reaches of the country, mostly on the Radovna and the Idrijca and its tributaries. With a little luck and the expert advice of our chief guide, considered an authority on Slovenian angling, I managed to land a "grand slam" —

a brown, rainbow, brook and marble trout topped off with a Soča grayling.

The final day of my fishing brought the long-anticipated trip to the fabled Soča, a freestone, thick ribbon of water winding its way through the Julian Alps. While notorious for its emerald-turquoise color enhanced by the pure white limestone bed, the ample populations of sizeable marble trout also add to the appeal of this storied river. Endemic to Slovenia, the marble trout is found in the rivers and streams of the Adriatic watershed.

I, however, was not after the marble trout specifically, having bagged my trophy the day before on a tributary of the Idrijca, which itself is an offshoot of the Soča. Part freestone and part chalk stream, the diverse entomology and nearly consistent year-round temperature and depth make the Idrijca an appealing waterway for anglers throughout the season. While browns are predominant here, the marble trout in these waters are nearly all trophy size and generally landed on a nymph. Restrictions on line weights and strike indicators add to the challenge that moderate to experienced anglers will relish.



*Nebasa means “heaven” in Slovenian. Nebasa cabins offer stunning views of the Soča River Valley*

But back to the Soča. In addition to marble trout, this water is also home to another unique specimen, the Adriatic grayling. Fun to play and a beautiful gray-gold color, this was the fish we were after. A late spring had delayed the snow melt, so the Soča was running high, fast and a little opaque. A point of confluence with the Lepena heralded somewhat calmer waters and here my guide chose an egg pattern. A few casts yielded no takers, but as my guide pointed out, there were definitely grayling in the middle of the stream, relatively motionless in the stronger current. A few minutes of silent observation highlighted the small midges that were continuously floating by, and though we didn't see any rises, we decided to give it a shot.

The fish I was after took a midge pattern on my third cast and headed downstream, jumping twice in the process. Wary of ripping the hook out, I followed on foot for about 50 yards into the main Soča until the fish could be netted – a beautiful 3-pound 14-inch Adriatic grayling. Grand slam complete!

Challenging but exciting fishing and breathtaking natural beauty are only two of this wondrous country's many attractions. WWI and WWII history, a variety of fascinating architectural styles, incredible underground

caverns (including the UNESCO World Heritage site, the Škocjan Caves), darling towns from Romanesque to classic Alpine, great food and some fabulous wine make Slovenia an ideal destination for nonfishing companions as well. Take a little bit of Bavaria, a sliver of Tuscany, a stretch of the Danube, and a slice of the Balkans and you have Slovenia, one of Europe's best-kept secrets and a true "Europe in Miniature." With two thorough staff visits and another pending, Frontiers is poised to coordinate the fishing or leisure holiday you've been waiting for.



**Season**

April 1-December 1: trout and grayling on the alpine rivers

May 1-December: trout and grayling on the Unec and Krka chalk streams

December 1-February 15: Huchen on the Sava and its tributaries

Catch-and-release is predominant.

Restrictions vary from river to river regarding dry fly only, strike indicators and lead shot.

**Guides:** All of the guides are English-speaking and service oriented and most of them log over 150 days a year on the water.

**Tackle:** 9-ft, 5-wt fly rods with floating line is standard. 9-ft, 9- or 10-wt rods are recommended for trophy catches. Flies: Caddis, mayflies, nymphs, egg patterns, large streamers if targeting trophy trout or hucho. Size 12-14 in the early season and 18-20 later in the year. Dry flies are suggested in size 16-18 throughout.

**Accommodations:** Slovenia boasts a variety of accommodations, from private mountain retreats to cozy B&Bs to Relais & Chateaux properties. We'll cater your stay to your personal preference.

**Prime time:** June and September



*Frontiers' Kirsten Gardner with her Adriatic grayling*

