ENGLISH

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# THEMATIC CIRCULAR WALKING ROUTE OF NATURAL AND CULTURAL HERITAGE IN THE AREA OF KOBJEGLAVA NAD TUPELČE

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# Karst ponds – ancient water sources

The locals will always be thirsty because they stole prosciutto from God. True. Because the Karst, this beautiful region, has no running water on surface. The precious resource is hidden deep in the heart of Karst. Every single drop of water was a blessing from above back in time and the people have preserved it in typical water collectors named kali (ponds). Today, when abundance and modernization are common, we reach for water by just pressing a button, so we are not aware of the value water has. The locals would like to remind the guests of that with nine wonderful Karst ponds on this route. We want you to be overwhelmed with emotions in this fairness of the rock region. Stone and men living with each other, and with working hands of the locals, there grows the most beautiful Karst flower – the vine. If you listen carefully to the singing birds, if you smell the meadows while walking and you let the pine trees rustle into your ears the story of the region, then you can feel how vivid Karst really is!

Pond is a low hollow in Karst soil which collects rainwater. The bottom of a pond is covered with a layer of clay so water does not trickle through. Natural ponds shape from rock-disintegration, which creates in the Karst sinkhole a stratum of waterproof clay, where rainwater collects and forms a natural drinking reservoir. Little underground streams increase the level of water in the ponds by piercing through rocks. It is not hard to understand why ponds have little water in some periods, since the amount of collected water is depends on the quantity of these little streams and precipitation. Ponds were once also very important to humans, but later on people started building wells on which evaporation of water has no effects and in which water is cleaner. Ponds were intended for watering of animals but still had an important role in region's nature. Farmers cleaned and maintained the ponds and sandbanks. They also watched over ponds in dry periods and particularly at night. Because of the hardworking farmers, people started to cover the bottom of a low sinkholes with clay and wait for rain. These artificial ponds slowly developed and gradually it was impossible to distinguish between natural ponds and the artificial ones. Cattle is no longer fed in nature so the original usage of ponds is almost lost. Because of high temperatures and lack of care, the vast majority of ponds overgrown. Sadly, people started to dump their waste into these ponds and thus destroying the original Karst sinkholes. However, a characteristic flora which is now studied as an independent subcategory of Karts vegetation, developed where organic waste was dumped. Ponds are very much important for fauna as well, since it offers a specific habitat to animals, such as dragonflies, that are closely linked to water.

# Nine water treasures on the route

The thematic route includes nine ancient water sources nearby villages Kobjeglava and Tupelèe with the purpose to discover and preserve natural and cultural heritage of Karst. During hour and a half long walk you will learn about the importance of ponds for local people back in time. Today these water collectors are slowly being restored and people being reminded about the value of the water in everyday life. The majority of almost 7 km long path runs mostly in the pleasant shade of pine trees. Path is suitable for walk in every season, but the most beautiful is in the early spring or autumn days, when nature glows in fascinating colors. Welcome on the route!

# Two villages – one architecture

The village of Kobjeglava is most known for its picturesque stone-made homes, which lie close to each other and are situated around the local church. Alongside the typical Karst architecture, the closed yards in front of the houses, called borjači also add to the uniqueness of the hamlet. Once upon a time, the Karst region had little vegetation and the north wind called burja blew cold. This is why the locals started to build homes with its back to the wind and its front to the sun to keep the house warm. The yard was the place of all the local life throughout the year. The main part of the borjač was the stonewell, or štirna, which provided the most precious good – water. The well had an important role and so it was also decorated by the wealthiest families in Kobjeglava. Ordinary peasants had to ask for drinking water, but still used the water from the nearby ponds for washing clothes and for cooking. The population in the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was growing rapidly, so the authorities built public wells to assure people with water. This public stonewells can still be found in the village – a smaller one in upper Kobjeglava, and a larger one in the part named Gorice. The stone arches named kalune represent one of the most magnificent achievements of the local art. The arches are normally covered with stone or bricks. The heavy wooden door of the arch protected the family of intruders.

The village as we know today gradually shaped on the South-west from the 6th and 7th Century. The center of Kobjeglava is the church with its nearby old linden tree. The lower part of the village is the other center, with the public well, around which locals gathered to talk about different events in the hamlet. In the 17th and 18th Century, the locals gained some money by selling their harvest in Trieste. They used the earnings to renovate their homes. This was the time of closed buildings, standing close to each other and form the characteristic Karts architecture. In order to remain safe from the wind, the locals covered the roof also with stones. Another specific part of the typical house is the gank, a wooden balcony, which was used to connect the rooms on the floor and for drying the produce.

# The story of our forefathers

The first findings in this area are from the Iron Ages, but some claim that the ruins in Jelenca Cave are from the Neolithic period. According to locals, the name Kobjeglava is linked with the local hill named Kop. Traces of the ancient Roman Route from Aurisina to Ljubljana can still be seen on the hill where Kobjeglava lies.

Kobjeglava was mentioned for the first time as Cublaglauua in 1349 in the written record of local properties and incomes of the Aquileia Patriarch. The name for the village slightly changed in years, and during the Mussolini time, it was given also the Italian name of Cobbia.

The greater Karst Region was inhabited uninterruptedly from the Stone Ages on. Around 3500 years ago, people start to move from their cave dwellings to the fortified settlements. The Romans came to this area in 178 B.C.

# Natural and cultural attractions along the path

**The monument to the fallen soldiers** represents the characteristic Karst house covered with tiles, the rock portal leading to the yard in which stands the well. The erected rocks connected with a chain symbolize the locals who fell in the Slovene Liberation Front in 1941.

**The church of Archangel Michael** was rebuilt in the 17th Century. The main altar is represents the Archangel and is one of the best examples of altars in Baroque style of the Littoral region.

**Kalune** (kamniti portali) odpirajo vhode v kraške borjače. Izdelane so iz velikih kosov kraškega kamna, na katerih so pogosto reliefno upodobljeni različni okraski. Prve starejše kalune so bile v zgornjem delu izdelane v polkrožni obliki. Pozneje, s pričetkom uporabe večjih vozov (zaradi reje govedi), je bilo potrebno graditi večje oglate kalune.

The hamlet offers **typical architecture of Karst** including farm and residential buildings. The original narrow streets and characteristic homes with in-walled yards borjači, which face the south and protects from north winds, cover the arid rocky soil on top of the hill.

**The stone portals** named kalune serve as entrances to the yards. The portals are made of large pieces of Karst stone, which are often decorated. The oldest portals have an semicircular shape, but because larger carriages were used in more recent times, people needed bigger and angular portals.

**The Karst wells** called štirne are one of the most beautiful examples of stone cutting. They were and are still now very important in the relationship between locals and water. Those who did not have their personal well, could took the water from the community well which was built by villagers. The community well was locked in dry periods and the senior village then distributed the water daily to families depending on the number of their members.

**Rise making** from pine trees is also a tradition of the village. The locals show how rise was made. The rise was used mainly in chemical industry. There are two ways to make rise – the one where pines are cut down, and the one where they extract pitch from a living pine, which was more frequent.

**Stone columns** called menhirs were erected in sign of eternal life. The tradition of erecting stones for the deceased was kept alive for a long time. The rifts of these stones were often filled with mortal remains of the beloved. From generation to generation the rite stayed in the local hamlet customs until the middle 20th Century.

According to oral tradition, the **Nenča cave** was named after the prehistoric settlement. It is said that cavemen lived in this stone shelter as well as in the near **Hrami cave**. Locals took the story about cavemen and came up with a tale about dwarfs, living in the caves. These dwarfs gave the name to the two surrounding hills where a large quantity of rocks is kept. The tale talks about these dwarfs who throw stones from the hill. On the hills Škratljevica and Robotnica lie two large mounds, the ruins of ancient forts. According to locals rites that were forbidden in public took place before and in the Hrami cave.

# Interesting and rare animals

**European tree frog** is a kind of tailless amphibian. It lives in almost all of Europe and is endangered because of drying and poisoning of swamps. The European tree frog is 4 to 5 cm long and has a smooth skin. The body is bright green, but can change its color depending to the environment, so frog can also be gray of brown with dark spots. Its fingertips have larger round clinging pads. Males are much smaller than females and have yellow, whereas females have white neck. Tadpoles have eyes on the side of the body, which is yellow with gold-colored belly. Adults can be found at wood edges and in meadows with high vegetation. Tadpoles normally live in large water holes with dense vegetation, but sometimes move also to smaller puddles. Tadpoles avoid water with fish and mate between April and June. Like most of amphibians, also the European tree frog depends on water while procreating, when males can be heard many kilometers away.

**Yellow-bellied toad** is a small frog with warty skin and dun or olive-colored back. The toad has a characteristic yellow belly with black spots and grows up to 4,5 cm. The toad can be found in small river pools and streams, in muddy puddles, minor pools and in areas with no fish. Ashore they live under withered woods, rocks and tree and bush roots, near streams

and marsh meadows to 2100 meters above sea level. When threatened, the yellow-bellied toads fold and color in red. In Slovenia they live up to 30 years.

**Little owl** is a small day and night bird which is very common in this area and has a little head with big, yellow-rimmed eyes and a short tail. Little owl can be seen on wood edges or on meadows where they hunt their pray, mainly at night or in the early morning. Athene noctua, as there owls are called in Latin, relates to the Greek goddess Athena, who had an owl as her symbol. Little owls is from 20 to 30 cm long and is predominantly white with bright spots. Their belly is bright with brown and with spots. Owls live in little scarce woods, fruit gardens with old trees and often also near humans. They live in western Europe up to the Mura river and in northern and northeastern Africa. Little owls eat insects, little rodents and reptiles and rarely with other little birds. They nest from April to July in tree hollows, where females lay from three to six eggs.

**Stag beetle** is a big, black and brown beetle and lives in southern, central and western Europe, however, it was seen also in south of Sweden, in England and east from Anatolia in Syria. It is the biggest European beetle and adult is up to 85 mm long. The name for it was given by the chops of males, which look like ones of a stag. Even if these big chops look very threatening, they are not dangerous. Males use them for fighting for territories and females, which have small chops. Stag beetles live in dusk, when males buzz around and search for females. Beetles grow up in four years. Larvae live in decayed wood or dying trees and have a form of bowels. They have characteristic orange head with very strong chops. For three months they change into chrysalis and finally they fly away as adult stag beetles. Adults use their chops to cut the bark and drink sap. Males often depend on females because of these awkward chops.

Meadows offer a great variety of daylight **butterflies** which are generally connected with open air and sunny habitat. Daylight butterflies are the most colorful ones and represent only a tenth of all butterfly species. Slovenia has very diverse butterfly species. In Karst more than 50 kinds of daylight butterflies can be found in only one meadow.

**Bees** are extremely diverse on blooming Karst meadows. Most of them live alone and different species collect pollen only on particular plants. Around 557 species of bees can be found in Slovenia. Each female nest and provide for food alone.

# Plant diversity along the path

On the route are found habitats of different types of flowers, rare grasses and herbs:

Needle Grass (Stipa eriocaulis ssp. carniola)
Quaking Grass (Briza media)
Joaquins Kidney Vetch (Anthyllis montana ssp. jaquiniana)
Trieste Gentian (Gentiana tergestina)
Liburnia Clove (Dianthus liburnicus)

Narbonne (Blue) Flax (Linum narbonense)
Figwort (Scrophularia laciniata)
Mountain Pasqueflower (Pulsatilla montana)
Rock Knapweed (Carici humilis - Centaureetum rupestris)
White Sedge (Carex alba)
Fingered Sedge (Carex digitata)
Winter Savory (Satureja montana)
Sage (Salvia officinalis)
Wild Asparagus (Asparagus acutifolius)
Narrow-Leaved Asparagus (Asparagus tenuifolius)
Butchers Broom (Ruscus aculeatus)
Montpellier Milk Vetch (Astragalus illyricus)
Iris (Iris pallida illyrica)
Peony (Paeonia officialis)
Saffron Lily (Lilium bulbiferum)
Poets Narcissus (Narcissus poeticus ssp. radiiflorus)
Hellebore (Helleborus odorus)
Green-Winged Orchid (Orchis morio)
Dark-winged Orchid (Orchis ustulata)
Early Purple Orchid (Orchis signifera)
Fragrant Solomons Seal (Polygonatum odoratum)
Lily Of The Valley (Convallaria majalis)
Georgia Bulrush (Centaurea macroptilon)

Apart from these, you may also notice interesting kinds of trees and bushes:

Black Pine (Pinus nigra)
Hop Hornbeam (Ostrya carpinifolia)
European Hornbeam (Carpinus betulus)
Flowering Ash (Fraxinus ornus)
Downy Oak (Quercus pubescens)
European Turkey Oak (Quercus cerris)
English Brown Oak (Quercus robur)
Mahaleb Cherry (Prunus mahaleb)
Hawthorn (Crataegus laevigata)
Rock Buckthorn (Frangula rupestris)
Mountain Ash (Sorbus aucuparia L.)
Cornelian Cherry Dogwood (Cornus mas)
Smoketree (Cotinus coggygria)
Common Juniper (Juniperus communis L.)
Mulberry (Morus)
Bird Cherry (Prunus avium)
Horse Chestnut (Aesculus hippocastanum)
Staghorn Sumac (Rhus typhina)
Walnut (Juglans regia)