

MONTE NEGRO



TOP BIKING TRAIL 4

ENDLESS LANDSCAPES

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 TT4 Route – we will be glad to post them at the website www.tt4.bjelasica-komovi.me.

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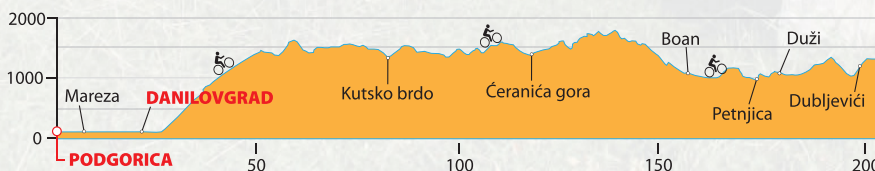
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ELEVATION PROFILE

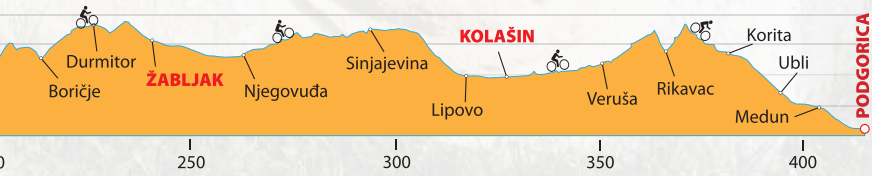


SIGNPOSTING



ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS

Duration: 5 - 7 days
Length: 415 km
Total climb: 10674 m
Highest point: 1908 m
Lowest point: 50 m



Top Biking Trail 4

Endless Landscapes

From the old royal capital grown in the sea of stone to Atlantis sunk in the sea of grass. A course of semology (Interested to graduate in this science? See below...) according to a timetable set by the blasting time in a mine. Rolling along a route on which the monastery stone has been passed from hand to hand. Crossing over the canyon in which sun and look do not reach. From waterless villages in which rainwater is drunk, to villages flowing with milk (and honey, as well). Along the magical circuit of Durmitor to the highest town in the Balkans. Montenegro Tibet, without the Buddhists/ with clotted cream, smoked ham and fresh flat bread. From the cradle of the Tara River to the nymph lake, then from sky to earth via the

ancient Medun (Medeon).

Completing the TT4 Route (as well as the other Top Trail Routes) is not easy. However, in order to tackle it one needs a good, but not top level fitness – far more important will be a positive approach, determination and good planning, so that we always have sufficient time for harder sections. The areas through which we will pass won't cease thrilling and inspiring us, and the ultimate reward – the poetry of travelling along the exotic areas and the luck to see some of the most beautiful 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 setting off it's good to know:

Basic information on the route:

- length: 415km
- duration: 5-7 days
- highest point : 1908masl (the Sedlo Pass on Durmitor)
- lowest point : well, just 50m ... but the bold ones (Podgorica)

The route can also 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.

Due to the remoteness of many sections a ride in a group is recommended, and as a minimum of

equipment one should always have a map and a compass (or much better, a GPS device), a mobile telephone, a torch, basic tools for bike and a spare tyre.

The TopTrail 4 Route is fully marked with signposts, and from the website www.tt4.bjelasica-komovi.me one can download the GPS data (track logs and waypoints), which will make navigation on the route easier and safer.

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.

Let's go then...



1

PODGORICA – DANILOVGRAD – PREKORNICA – VUČJE (101KM)

We start the journey in the centre of Podgorica, from Trg Republike (the Republic Square) (50m above sea level). First along Vučedolska Street to the west, then through the Njegoš's Park and over the Moscow Bridge (700m from the start). Crossing over this modern and lovely small pedestrian bridge we have an opportunity to enjoy an exquisite view of its big brother which from the right side jumps over the Morača River – the Millennium suspension bridge is the pride of the town.

On the other side of the little bridge we turn first left into Jovana Tomaševića Boulevard then to the first street right (Vasa Raičkovića St). It will take us to the large new Temple of Christ's Resurrection (1.5km from the start). By the church we will take a shortcut to George Washington Boulevard along which we will head right, but just until the first street on the right side (Mihailo Lalić Boulevard). From here on we just stick to that street, which after pa-

ssing through Tološi pine forest narrows into SKOJ St, and at the exit from Podgorica it continues as Partizanski put (Partisan Road) and takes us through the plain towards Danilovgrad.

From the exit from Podgorica to the excursion site called Mareza we can use a biking trail which exists there. Mareza (8km from the start) is a green oasis with a fish pond beautifully equipped with ducks, as it should be. In Spuž (12.5km from the start) we join the old Podgorica – Danilovgrad road, turn left, and through a lovely vegetation and along a nearby Zeta River we ride further to the northwest.

Danilovgrad (22km from the start, 50masl) definitely should not be left without at least a little bit of wandering through the little streets in the centre, adorned with smiling old façades. A garden of a cafe or a restaurant in the pedestrian zone will be an excellent basis for watching and catching the pulse of the local life. And as every genuine traveller knows well, without that secret entrance to the centre of the place we are visiting, without imagining how our life would look like in it, there is no that mild melancholy which lifts a travel to a higher level. Well,





Danilovgrad is a good place for a quality daydreaming on alternative destinies, and one should not miss an opportunity for that. And for everything else which is more concrete than melancholy, we can visit the website of tourism organization of that little town: www.tod.co.me.

From Danilovgrad the track of our route coincides with the track of the TT1 Route. We leave the town towards its northern end, crossing over the Zeta River (on the left under the bridge there is a local beach).

The greatest attraction in the surroundings of Danilovgrad is about 19km away Ostrog Monastery, the building of which, built into the cliff high above the valley, can be reached along an excellent new road. We pass the turn-off for the monastery (on the left) about 3km from the town's centre. The Ostrog Monastery is visited by people from around the world, so it could be an excellent half-day detour for us too...

At the entrance to the little village of Potkraj we pass through a green „tunnel“ after which the first big ascent on our tour starts (4.5km from the centre of Danilovgrad): to Prekornica, 24km long, from 60m to 690masl. The gradient at the start is about 9%, later on it is gentler.

On the left behind the main road towards Nikšić a long body of Bjelova rises. We slowly conquer the view over the entire flat and vast Bjelopavlići Plain in which Danilovgrad lies. The asphalt is narrow, rather solid. Lush vegetation along the road gives way to stunted bushes from which we will not get much shade – therefore on a summer day this very strenuous and long ascent should be planned for an early morning or late afternoon.

From a drinking fountain and a monument on the left (7.1km, 230masl) the gradient becomes steeper again (9%) but there are also many gentler sections, and the serpentine starts. However, in that section vegetation creates shade again. Lovely vistas



are entailed, and on the Krstac Pass, on which from a steep wall of waves which we have ridden we finally immerse in the karst interior of Mt Prekornica, we get a farewell gift: the best view over the valley. Here as well the hardest section of the ascent ends, and further on it will be somewhat easier.

From a dale called Poljica (16.5km from Danilovgrad) we ascend again (9%), now along a poorer asphalt road. The ascent then turns into an up-and-down riding along an empty road which leads through a short vegetation, lowering us into the little valley of the katun called Bzo and in Borov do (the Pine Dale) (19km). There we turn right, to the east, and ascend to a spring called Studeno (21km from Danilovgrad, 1150masl), a popular picnic spot (at which it will be unlikely to meet someone unless it is a weekend). The spring is located about 100m on the left from the TT4 signpost and information board which informs about the name of the

site.

The road further on leads us through a long and interesting weekend settlement, and gently climbs taking us into the forest with lots of shade. At 23 km from Danilovgrad and at an elevation of 1207masl, at a large building of the Studeno Mountain Hut on the left, both weekend settlement and asphalt road end, and a poor macadam road (unpressed, occasionally cracked by water), which luckily climbs moderately, starts.

The Studeno Mountain Hut is open only on notice, contact can be found at: [prekornica.me/ pla-ninarski-dom](https://prekornica.me/pla-ninarski-dom)

Crossing over Mt Prekornica in this section consists of a constant descending into the bottoms of rugged „spoons“ and ascending along their handles – sometimes we will feel like a sip of fish oil in a real spoon, which someone, well, just hesitates to swallow...





In that scuffle we also pass an interesting Četnji do – a little bit of open space and grass, to break the monotony of the forest, then again a difficult ascent into the forest, along a „wild“ macadam road. After about 1-1.5km (4km from the mountain hut), again a little bit of open sky in the dale of an appropriate name (Dočići – tiny dales), and the beginning of a slightly better macadam road as well. About 2km further on our long ascent from Potkraj ends. Nevertheless, as we have already mentioned, the rest of the journey will not pass without shorter uphill sections.

On a hot summer day a long ride through the forests of Prekornica will feel good and the lovers of forest smells, light and shadows will be at home as well, but it is also possible that such surroundings will occasionally

seem already monotonous to us. Therefore, katun called Suva Ponikvica will be a welcome change. Slightly after it there is a katun called Srednja Ponikvica (34km from Danilovgrad, 11km from Studeno Mountain Hut, 1460masl), in which we turn left (to the north), branching off the TT1 Route which here goes right, towards the east.

In the next 3km we ascend to 1650masl, and then via a little katun called Devič bor we descend to the forest junction (40.5km from Danilovgrad, 18km from the mountain hut, 1430masl) at which from the left, from the direction of Nikšić that is to say the nearby excursion site King Nikola's Zabrán, the TT2 Route comes. We continue to the right, uphill and via the Devič Bor Peak (1500masl), and after only 2km, near katun called Rekočica, we leave that route too: it goes right, and we will go left towards Seoce, the largest open-pit mine of the Nikšić Bauxite Mine.



The macadam road is now predominantly quite good, so we easily progress through the area called Štitovo, via Lazareva and Piperska lokva (puddle). Again a little bit uphill then a little bit downhill through the forest – on the whole, however, there is more climbing – via Mali Borovnik hill we arrive near the mine.

At 52km from Danilovgrad (29.5km from the Studeno Mountain Hut, 1535 masl) we enter the blasting zone. There is an information board here which will inform us on the blasting timetable, meaning that it might happen that we must wait for some time.

Blasting timetable: 10-11a.m., 1-2p.m., 5p.m. One should bear in mind that not only these times but also the appearance of the road in this area might be changed - depending on the changes in the open pit, the travel route of the mining machines, etc.

We travel through the zone

in the next 1.6km of the road, along the way going past the edge of the open pit – a strange, attractive, and at the same time also depressing sight. At the exit from the zone (54km from Danilovgrad, 31km from the Studeno Mountain Hut, 1530masl) an asphalt road starts on which we will stay in the next 1.5km only: at the end of that distance we will turn right, onto a macadam road. (The asphalt road continues via the Štitovo Mine to the valley of the Gračanica River and past the Liverovići Lake towards Nikšić).

Somewhere in the middle of the zone around 6km long descent starts, so we will advance rapidly until the 60th kilometre from Danilovgrad (37km from the Studeno Mountain Hut, 1330masl). On the way we go past a point from which a lovely view over the Krupac Lake opens, west from Nikšić. And then a 5.5km long ascent via abandoned stone and concrete structures of the Kucko brdo settlement (out of nowhere) is ahead of us, past

another open pit – and back to the elevation from which we have just descended ... After the settlement the macadam road becomes poorer. We ride through the conifers and the rough waves of craggy hills roll and foam all around.

After the ascent the road first gently then increasingly steeply descends towards the valley of Bojovića Luke. On the bottom of the valley we reach a place (68km from Danilovgrad, 45km from Studeno Mountain Hut, 1440 masl) at which we reach a narrow asphalt road and proceed left along it. (To the right the road goes towards 7km away Kapetanovo jezero (the Captain's Lake)).

Kapetanovo jezero is an ornament of already in itself magnificent Morača Mountains. Although it is threatened by the construction of little brick houses which disturb and spoil once pristine idyll by this mountain eye, the human hand could not change a perfect beauty of its position and surroundings: a grand natural amphitheatre guards a blue water mirror which easily scoops up an entire sky into its palm. The northern wall of this hidden lair of magic ends with a high terrace bounded by an enormous rock called Brnjik, with „boxes“ for genuine lovers and mountaineers - those who climb up there (about a 45-minute hike along a footpath) can best observe a precious play of the magic wand of Mother Nature, and also enjoy another lake (Manito jezero (the Crazy Lake)), which has decided to shine with silver precisely up there.

On the road to the lake one also

passes over the unreal white wave of Mededa greda (the Bear's Cliff). And those wanting even more from the lake can proceed down a fantastic, 11km long Mrtvica River Canyon until they reach the Mojkovac – Podgorica main road, in the village of Međuriječje. (This is an excursion mainly for hikers. The persistent will manage to tackle it on bike too, but since in many places they have to carry it for several metres, this is not an adventure for heavily loaded bikes.)

We slowly descend along a stunning valley to the little village of Krnja Jela (a couple of houses). Proceeding through an irresistible scenery, we leave the asphalt road (72.5km from Danilovgrad, 50km from the Studeno Mountain Hut, 1400masl) and head along a poor macadam road to the north, towards still remote Vučje Motel.

On the road to there we will first tackle a 2km long ascent along a grassy road (good for a ride) to Konjsko hill (from 1355 to 1485masl), through a wide open area on which grass hardly succeeds to tame the sharp teeth of the stone it covers.

Our landmark for travel is a tall radio antenna which can be seen from afar, and we should go past it. About 400m before it we come across a stone water trough called Konjski ubao (on the right). From the motel we will come back onto this place, and then we will continue along a path we now perceive in the meadow on the right.

On the top of the hill we enter a low grove (for the pessimists)



Ceranica Gora

TT4

Pod-Dažnik

Jadović
1606

Bršanski katun

Rozin vrh
1521

Pribranci

Bojovića luka

Petrova rupa

Kutsko Bdo

K u t s k o b r d o

Zagrad

Liverovići

Carine

Mijlje Polje

Staro Selo

Bjeloševina

D. Morakovo

that is to say high bushes (for the optimists) and a little later through an already quite decent and pleasant deciduous forest descend to the Vučje Motel in the ski centre of the same name (80km from Danilovgrad, 58km from the Studeno Mountain Hut, 1370 masl).

2 VUČJE - LOLA - BOAN – ŠAVNIK – NEVIDIO – DUŽI – BORIČJE – SEDLO PASS– ŽABLJAK (146KM)

From the motel an asphalt road leads along which one can in a short while descend to Nikšić (in case we need it), and we will, after a well-deserved refreshment, turn back towards Konjski ubao. As already mentioned, when we reach the water trough, we turn left, along the grassy path which forks towards the east there. That way we will prolong a little bit the magic of hovering in the scenery in which the rows of scattered stones resemble the remains of some Atlantis, long ago sunk into the sea of grass.

In the next 4.5km we climb in the direction of the northeast to Vlaško brdo (1610m), mainly on a good, grassed meadow road, with a stretch of macadam road in the middle. In the area called Lukavica and on the edge of Mliječna b r d a

(the Milky Hills) (the name would also fit nicely somewhere in „The Lord of the Rings“), on the right a striking ridge of Gackova greda Peak rises, and immediately behind it the colourful icons of this area – the peaks of Veliki (Big) Žurim and Mali (Small) Žurim (To that side one can also reach Kapetanovo jezero). We turn sharply northwestwards and via the katun on Čeranića gora, along a good macadam road, reach the vastness of Krnovsko polje (the Krnovo Field). There we will join the old Nikšić - Šavnik - Žabljak asphalt road (15km from the Vučje Motel, 1386masl) and head right along it, towards Šavnik. Less than a kilometre further, at an elevation of 1370m our descent from Vlaško brdo ends and an ascent starts which will last for the next 7km – to 1620masl at Kekića ploče, above Štirni do.

Only 2.5km from reaching the asphalt road, in the little village of Potrk we turn right, onto a new macadam road section – this one will be 25km long. On the left in this place a monument is located.

Through the isolated distances and dimensions of Krnovsko polje we sneak along a solid, occasionally poorer road. The most beautiful sections are grassy – on them along a green band we will sail through the open vistas in which a soft persistence of the grass always outsmarts the stubbornness of the stone.

After a steep des-



cent into Štirni do (8km after leaving the asphalt road, 1470masl) we start an arduous travel into a turbulent expanse of Mt Lola. In the whirlwind of shapes and perspectives there are many things that we cannot absorb, so hills and valleys as if they are hiding from us: when we look at them - they disappear, and it seems that they come back only when we go further past them. Along the way (8.5km from the asphalt road) we pass a place with a beautiful view over Konjev do (the Horse Dale), the cone of Gradina peak and the Bijela River Valley which descends towards Šavnik. And very far on the horizon on the right a beautiful present sticks out: the highest peaks of Mt Durmitor, including Bobotov kuk Summit.

Reaching Mt Lola is actually a series of uphill and downhill sections, through which we slowly progress upwards, all the way to 1820 masl on Razvršje Hill, 19km from the asphalt road on Krnovsko polje. The road is poor in spots (cracked macadam road, there are also the dirt road sections on which after the rains there will be mud) but the scenery is remarkably interesting.

On Razvršje we start a very long descent, which, however, again will not be constant but broken with shorter uphill sections. Nevertheless, a 26km long descent, to an elevation of 970m, is good news for tired legs. During the descent, still high above in the crags of Gornja Morača (the Upper Morača Region), on the Semolj Mountain (below which the Morača River has its headwaters) we join the Mioska – Boan – Šavnik asphalt road

(25km from the asphalt road on Krnovsko polje, 1525masl). Along this quiet road with a very light traffic in no time we will pass the village of Krnja Jela, and land onto a little place of Boan (39km from the asphalt road on Krnovo, 1000 masl).

Miro Vuksanović, a writer born in nearby Krnja Jela, in his trilogy on Semolj wonderfully forges the magic of this area:

„Semolj is a heavy snow in snowdrifts and caps, under the rockfalls in a dale. Semolj is a big fog, dense, smoke-like, wet, on the mountain, we cannot see anything before us. Semolj is a cloud, black and sluggish, wallowed, slacker, slouch and immense. Semolj is a dense grass, tall and tufted in the valleys and hills, untouched. Semolj is a huge stone gully under the crags, in slopes, in cliffs with the sloughs. Semolj is an enormous never-ending forest, centuries-old and risky, on the lee slope with springs and brooks, under the flocks of the loveliest birds, in the wolf's howling. Semolj is a mountainous land, the words grow from it.“

Some sixty inhabitants, a grocery (the welcome one), a pub (depending on taste, perhaps also welcome), a tiny hotel which does not work, and a peaceful slumber in the pleasant valley of Tušinja Stream – it is Boan. For a traveller on the bike who has just passed ravines in Gornja Morača: a metropolis.

At the exit from Boan there is the junction of roads for Šavnik and Žabljak (we will go left, towards Šavnik), in the middle of which a wooden post, a local

attraction and the main paragraph of the Traffic Law in this place, stands. One should keep it in mind if by chance the night caught us on the road or if due to the fatigue the dark fell to our eyes earlier.

Three kilometres after the junction (4km from the hotel in Boan) the Tušinja River flows into the little Bukovica River, and this one, as if it has stolen something, swiftly enters a narrow canyon. In the vicinity of the confluence, a few hundred metres after the bridge along which we cross over the Bukovica River, a road towards the Podmalinsko Monastery with the Church of Saint Michael the Archangel, built in the 13th century, forks left.

A legend says that during the building of the Morača Monastery, stone from the quarry in the village of Tušinja near Boan was transported onto the building site from hand to hand, along a 20km long living line. When the monastery was finished, of the remaining stone left in the hands of people in the line, the Podmalinsko Monastery was built. The Podmalinsko Monastery (its name comes from the fact that it is located below the village called Malinsko (pod - below)) has been repeatedly destroyed and repaired. The last time it was deserted during the Second World War, and it was restored in 1998.

About 300m after the turn-off for the monastery our long descent (970masl) ends, and we start a three and a half kilometre long ascent (to 1160masl), after which we will ride downhill

again, towards Šavnik. Grabbing the height above the Bukovica River, at 5km from the hotel in Boan we go past a wonderful (when there is sufficient water) waterfall along which a local brook falls into a canyon. In this place the monastery is also below us.

On the descent towards Šavnik, from the point 10km from Boan we will have a lovely view over Šavnik. At the large junction above Šavnik (13km from Boan, 980masl) we turn right, towards Komarnica and Petnjica.

Our route will not take us through Šavnik, but those who want to visit it at this junction may proceed left. From there to this little town there are about 3km, downhill (an elevation loss of 130m). In Šavnik there are a couple of shops and a motel.

A great narrow and empty asphalt road lowers us into Petnjica, to the memorial complex dedicated to Vuk Karadžić, and then it ascends to the new Šavnik-Žabljak road. On this last section we pass a junction at which from the right the TT2 Route joins us - in the next 14km its line will coincide with the line of our route.

We will just cut that main road – and proceed along a short, steep asphalt road uphill section towards the Jatak ethno-restaurant (they also offer lodging in small wooden cabins), through an amazing, always freshly green area. After Jatak the things become even more attractive: we pass the Nevidio ethno village which also offers a restaurant and accommodation in more



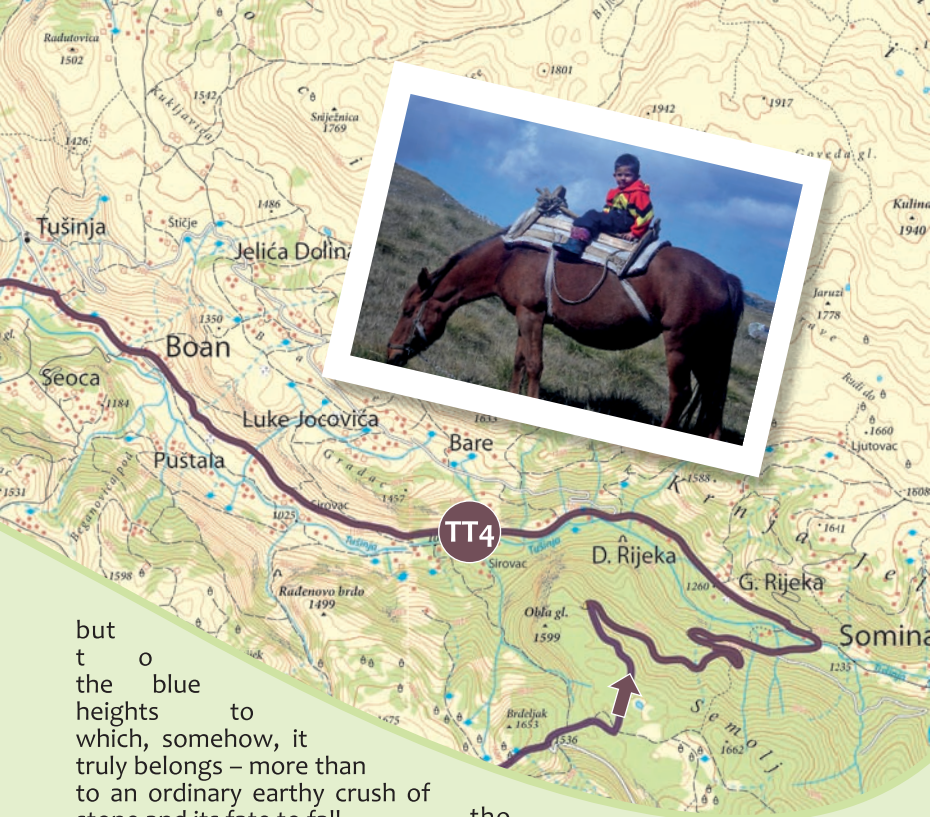
luxu-
rious sin-
gle-storey log ca-
bins (16km from Boan,
1020masl).

Through a stunning surround-
ings of Poščensko jezero (The
Pošćenje Lake) we descend into
a nearby bottom of the Komar-
nica River Canyon, and there we
will find ourselves before the
entrance into one of the mar-
vels of Montenegro - the Nevi-
dio Canyon.

The Nevidio Canyon (or Nevidj-
bog, as natives of this area call
it since sun never reaches many
of its sections) is, as it is claimed,
the last conquered canyon in Eu-
rope: only in 1965 the team of the
Javorak Mountaineering&Skiing
Association from Nikšić succee-
ded to pass along this about
1700m long and a few hundred
metres deep gorge, in some pla-
ces so narrow that up on its top
it could almost be jumped over.
The canyon wildly winds while
Mala (Little) Komarnica River
reveals its secret foaming on its
cascades and whirlpools (the
elevation loss, from the entran-
ce to the exit, is 125m). In order
to see that unique yet cruel bea-
uty, it is necessary to jump into
a freezing cold water in several
places and swim, so one should
not enter the canyon without
a neoprene wetsuit. No spe-
cial fitness and technical skills
are required, but the passing is
not recommended without an
adequate equipment and a gu-
ide. If you wish to tackle this ad-

ven-
ture
(and you sho-
uld, since those
who have experienced
it list it amongst the best in
their life) obtain information in
the ethno village.

At a junction at which the road
towards the upper section of
Komarnica (900m from the eth-
no village, 100masl) forks right,
we will turn left, onto a sharp
ascent towards a little bridge
above the canyon. From above
one can glance at the initial sec-
tion of the Nevidio Canyon. Even
better is the „secret“ vantage
point, towards which one he-
ads about 800m after the brid-
ge, along a hiking path which
branches off the road to the left
and it is about 300m long.
Although somewhat gentler,
our ascent is still demanding.
We pass below the magical cliff
called Žuta greda (the Yellow
Cliff) the colourful face of which
looms above us and we feel its
weight on ourselves. The road,
which is constantly being reborn
before us in the last minute, is
stretched in one place onto the
craggy bow which crazily sticks
out above the abyss on the left
side. That beak, a straddled
section of the cliff, strains to
take away our part of the world
and draw it with itself. But not
downwards, in the fatal plunge,



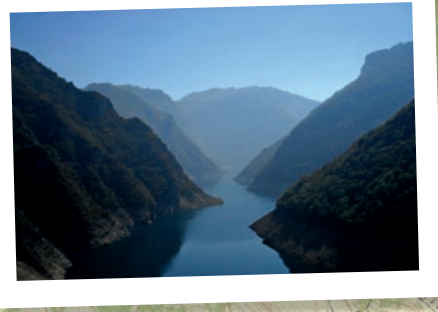
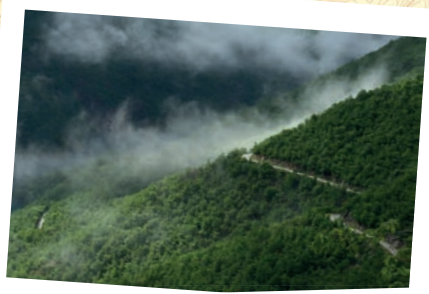
but
t o
the blue
heights to
which, somehow, it
truly belongs – more than
to an ordinary earthy crush of
stone and its fate to fall ...

On our high road above the lower section of the Komarnica River Canyon, the ascent ends on the third kilometer from the ethno village (1090masl), and at 4.5km we reach the grocery in the village of Duži (1060masl). There are no other houses in the vicinity - those are shyly hidden all around the place. But there are all the qualities which a genuine traveller loves so much: a long vintage stand and walls covered with shelves which heartily offer everything that folks in such places could (or dare to) wish for. Things we have bought here (as well as those we have brought along with us) we can immediately unwrap, stir or mince, and eat at the table which is placed there as well. If we need cutlery and a plate, we will get

those too.

This is one of those rare places which, as long as they exist, cannot be overwhelmed by tourist fad, because they have to be a meeting place, local information portal, a place for exchanging information on the living and the dead... What we have to say, we can say here. What we should hear, we will hear here. All in all, a visit to this typical representative of the traditional Montenegrin shopping mall is obligatory, even for those who are neither hungry nor thirsty.

About 600m after the grocery a path (and then a trail) leading to canyon forks left. It is an opportunity to descent on foot into its section which is rarely visited. And along with a good level of fitness, moderate weight on the bike and sufficient patience,



even more interesting adventure would be a descent to the canyon with a little steel horse by one's side, crossing along the little bridge of Duži to the other side, and the ascent along the same hiking trail to Župa Pivska. There one reaches a remote asphalt road and through a fantastic valley of birch trees soon arrives in the village of Gornja Brezna and the ethno villages called Montenegro and Mladost. At the end along the old road to Plužine we may return to our route again. This is, however, an enterprise for the more extreme travellers on two wheels and in any case before descending to the canyon one should definitely ask the locals about the condition of the trail and the very bridge).

For those who see fit to stay overnight in Duži: from the grocery to the left towards the edge of the canyon a road leads along which after about 500m one reaches a place suitable for camping. Along the way one should pay attention to wonderful old stone houses...

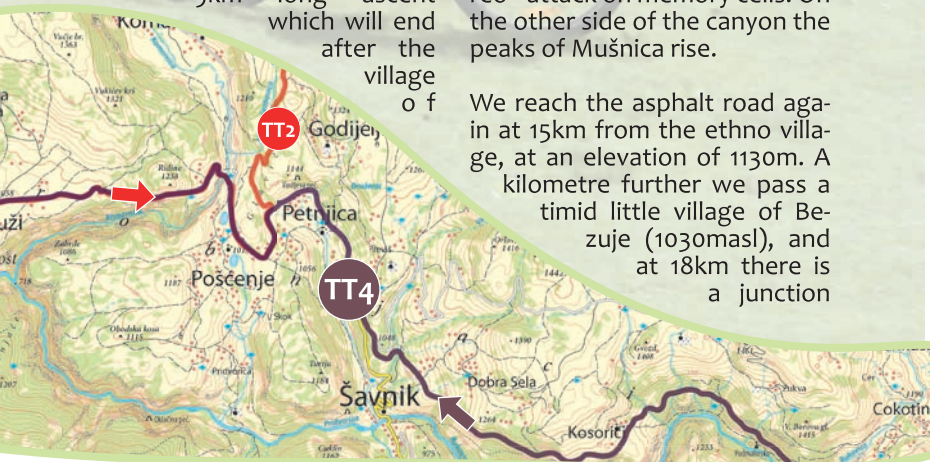
At 1.7km from the grocery we go past a lovely church on the village graveyard (on the right). At three kilometres from the grocery and at an elevation of 1020masl we start an almost 9km long ascent which will end after the village of

Dubrovsko, on Zmijski krš (the Snake's Rock)(1340masl). And since in this section we ride along the very edge of the canyon, a few hundred metres farther we will come across a spot from which a good „insight“ into a three hundred metres deep abyss below us opens.

The school in the scattered village of Dubrovsko (1060 masl) is located 10km from the ethno village. At 13km from the ethno village the asphalt road ends and a 7km long macadam road section (mainly solid and only occasionally poorer-unpressed-road) starts. We approach the edge of the canyon again: for the entire three kilometres the road boldly crawls along the very edge of the abyss, from which we will be mostly divided only by a narrow wall of the cliffs. That way we also reach Zmijski krš, from where we will ride downhill in the next 5km.

For the best view over the canyon - now already of Pivsko jezero (the Piva Lake) - one should, at 18km from the ethno village, down the stony meadow below the road, descend to the point from which we will be able to see at the same time both the upstream and the downstream stretch of the lake - a great „stereo“ attack on memory cells. On the other side of the canyon the peaks of Mušnica rise.

We reach the asphalt road again at 15km from the ethno village, at an elevation of 1130m. A kilometre further we pass a timid little village of Bezube (1030masl), and at 18km there is a junction





at which a road into the canyon forks left and downhill. (On the other side that road climbs towards the Izlazak ethno village and reaches the old Plužine - Nikšić road). The TT2 Route also goes to that side, so here we say good-bye to it, proceeding right and uphill towards the little village of Dubljevići.

The terrain is a pure karst so neither in Bezuje nor in the vicinity there is no living water, and that is the most waterless village in the entire Piva Region. The houses under the eaves have large troughs for collecting rainwater and snow melting.

A few hundred metres above the junction there is a place with an excellent view over the Piva Lake which glows blue in its depth, and 3km from the junction there is a spot with probably the best view on the entire leg from the Nevidio ethno village. (To the best place head

– of course carefully – along the edge of the cliff, about 50m from the road). Nevertheless, there is something else here: a soft meadow below the road is an exceptional place for camping. Waking up here, opening the entrance of the tent and being „blown away“ with an explosion of a fantastic scenery – do we need a better reason to plan an overnight stay in this deserted, magical place?

On the pass in Dubljevići at an elevation of 1340m our ascent from the junction ends (21km from the Nevidio ethno village, 3.7km from the junction). The little village is located in the gentle palm high above the canyon, and its lovely church also offers a large eaves with places for sitting – useful in the event of the rain.

The fact that only now we have returned to the elevation of Zmijski krš will not delight us



particularly, but the entire section from the Nevidio ethno village to here was very beautiful and we probably enjoyed even at those places at which we sweated decently. Every man to his taste, but this section of the TT4 Route many will probably list amongst the most pleasurable and, in a non-assertive way, loveliest at the TT Routes.

Every pleasure, they say, is to be paid, so this one is not the exception too: slightly more than a kilometre after the pass, at the entrance into a scattered village of Borkovići we turn right onto a macadam road (1310masl), and from there a strenuous section, 13km long, over the hills and dales, along an often poor road is ahead of us.

Svetozar Tomić in the book called “Piva and Piva Natives” in 1946 writes about Dubljevići as follows:

„There is no live water in the

village, people drink rainwater and snow water (melted water). In the village there is a private rainwater tank and the water is given from it to the villagers only on family patron feast or some other celebration.

And regarding Borkovići: „The houses are scattered in groups over the knolls, and not in the valleys due to big snowdrifts (snowbanks). In the valleys the cultivated fields are located. In the village there are no trees; in winter they bring the woods from Brijeg.

In Borkovići the houses are bungalows in which people and livestock live together, and they resemble the stables in Drobnjaci Region. Above the room, in the attic, in the box there are grains in baskets and a larder, and above the box for horses and cattle there is a box for sheep. The attic is connected with the house by a hatch, and sheep enter the attic through a little door, which is made in the roof, on

the upper side, near the bottom of the eaves. If the bungalow is entirely above the ground, then there are two doors on it: one for people and the other for livestock, otherwise there is one door only. ”

We start the ascent along a steep uphill section a few hundred metres long, on the large, loose stones on the road. In the dale which opens behind we will rest for a minute, and then a slightly less than 3km long ascent to Visoka glava (the High Head) follows - the first and the most difficult of the hills, which without rhyme or reason, uncalled and unprovoked, get in the way. In the lower section the road is poorer, and in the final section (where the ascent as well is gentler) somewhat better. On the pass (1550m, 3km from the asphalt road) on the right from the road we will spot the remnants of man-made stone forms.

From the pass according to the JETLH system (Just Enough To Lose Height) we descend along the other side, losing hard-earned piece of sky. The road is very poor here – loose rocks calling for experience on the bike. The landscape is a cruel, terrible, arid desert – it doesn't allow to be conquered, it doesn't let one live easily in it, and it doesn't let one cross it easily...

Down, in the grassed Dražkov do (Dražko's Dale), there is a katon (4km from the asphalt road, 1430 masl). From there we start an up-and-down riding through the dales (the first section, about 1km long, is the hardest). Here and there a tiny piece of land cleared with effort on

which instead of stones potato grows (at this elevation nothing can be grown except barley, rye and buckwheat, and of vegetables only cabbage and potato), and there we are on Jarčište hill. At 7km from the asphalt road in Dubljevići there is a little surprise for us: first an excellent macadam road, and then an asphalt road appear. A nice thing, after the things we have gone through. And a few hundred metres farther there is a pass (1472masl) – we head downhill again.

The landscape through which we pass is actually a high attic, a bow which cuts depth at the fork of the Piva River Canyon and a deep crack of Pirni do. The edge of the canyon is about 500m on our left, and we just start falling into Pirni do. To the little village of Boričje, down on the bottom, there is 3km and an elevation loss of 250 metres. Lounging on the comfortable mattress of the asphalt road down the hill which is appropriately called Brdo (the Hill), we will soon reach it.

A little village of Boričje is silent frightened on the bottom of a huge crack - if it sneezes or just coughs, those terrible slopes may collapse and bury it as if it has never existed. As the seal has to maintain the hole in the ice in order to be able to breathe, likewise, Boričje from below constantly watch a narrow piece of sky which has left to it, and it takes care to defend and sustain it with that longing. Probably for that reason locals hold their heads up high - it resembles pride, but in fact it is a genuine need and a serious job of looking up...

At the junction in the village (1230masl, 10km from the

asphalt road in Dubljevići) we join the TT1 Route which approaches us from the left, through Pirni do and from the direction of Plužine (the asphalt road and a downhill slope enable us to reach it rapidly). We will turn right and start a 3km long, difficult macadam road ascent up the northern wall of Pirni do, a threatening cliff called Ždrijelo (the Col). (Apart from that, this is also a beginning of a long climbing into the arms of Mt Durmitor: in the next 21km we will ascend to an elevation of 1900 masl. However, these first 3km are the hardest – later on we will have a gentler gradient and the asphalt road.)

The road soon becomes poorer (unpressed), and further on better and poorer sections (both of them are short) will take turns, with a little bit of dirt road here and there – only our constant advancing to the heights will be steady. The landscape is a low forest along the edge of the hill through which our look constantly and persistently makes its way into a valley below us). The final few hundred metres are the hardest, that is to say the extreme ones: a gradient of 15-20%, and the macadam road is poor.

We finally reach a narrow, empty Žabljak – Trsa asphalt road, on which we turn right. (The TT1 Route here goes left, towards the village of Trsa). Kilometres ahead of us are one of the most beautiful laps on all TT Routes in Montenegro: winding through often unearthly landscapes, below the high crown of the tallest peaks of Mt Durmitor, is an experience which one remembers for a whole life.

Once we reach still remote Ža-

bljak we will actually tackle only the southern half of an amazing „Durmitor's Circuit“ – a road which encompasses the crown of this mountain. In order to experience it on the whole, from Žabljak we should follow the TT4 Route which will over the Štuoc Pass, the Sušica River Canyon and the villages of Nedajno and Trsa, bring us again in the place at which we are now. The entire circuit is about 80km long and a total elevation gain is about 2500m – but every metre and every bead of sweat are worth the effort, so we strongly recommend you this ride.

A powerful tectonic action and glacial erosion have formed on the southern side of Durmitor a landscape which scarcely belong to our planet. Spiky towers and glacial cirques, long massive crags, broken and stubborn forms, solitary warriors and „petrified wedding parties“, cheeky and capricious, decorated and simple, cruel, small, big, threatening, indifferent, parked on a thin line between heaven and hell – an entire stone nation from afar gathered here on an assembly which no one knows the purpose of, and no one knows how long it will last.

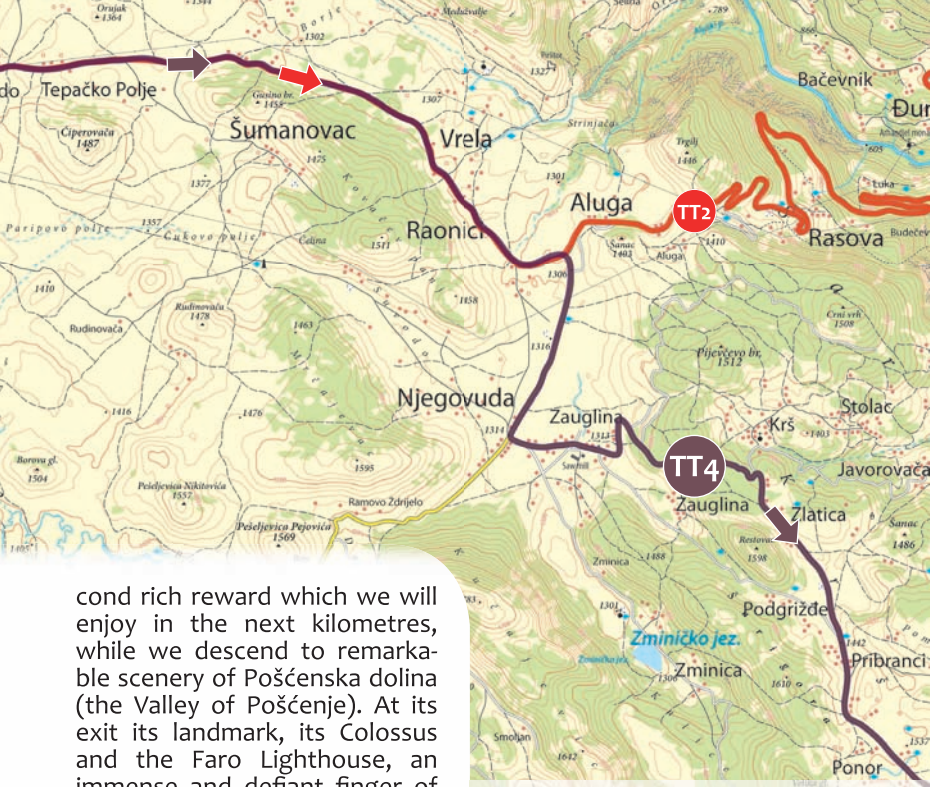
Where to look first? At the stone cathedrals and the bell towers of cliffs which loom above us, at bizzare, into the verticals inverted layers of rocks and grass on the Prutaš Peak? Or at brave patches of pastures – the islets of cultivated land and sparkling jewellery in the whirlpool of stones, at which oxen can occupy high hilltops and petrify there, enjoying (it is clearly visible) the view? Or one should look before oneself, at a stunning road



which irresistibly and merrily jumps to and fro and up and down through suns and heights, in a way not to miss a bit of pleasure in inclining the bike hither and thither, while through a deafening silence we direct the happy humming of our wheels?

We descend into a stony bubbling of Todorov do (Todor's Dale), and leaving it we do not even notice the ascent to Prijespa but below the reared cliff of Krecmani we already rush through Vodeni do (the Water Dale), downhill to the rest area by the spring called Šarban. A view over Prutaš is the best from the spot at 11.5km from reaching the asphalt road on Ždrijelo. Through the „door“ at 15.5km the best view over a immense, magnificent amphitheatre of Dobri do (the Good Dale) gushes.

From Šarban (1720masl, 17km from Ždrijelo) the final section of the ascent, to the pass called Sedlo (the Saddle)(1908masl) is ahead of us. During the ascent we go past a place at which from the right TT2 Route approaches us. From the pass we will be whipped by a view over the two sides of the world, both so irresistible that a kind of the vertigo, caused by every unrestrained and lavish gushing of beauty through the space and time, will be inevitable. The pass is one of the most beautiful places in Montenegro and one of the two highest points to which the asphalt road can bring us (the other one is on the Štuoc Peak, at the opposite side of Mt Durmitor, on the TT1 Route). After 21km of ascending from an elevation of 1230masl in Boričje, we have also deserved the se-



cond rich reward which we will enjoy in the next kilometres, while we descend to remarkable scenery of Pošćenska dolina (the Valley of Pošćenje). At its exit its landmark, its Colossus and the Faro Lighthouse, an immense and defiant finger of the Stožina Peak waits for us. Nevertheless, to there several more kilometres of sliding along a steep side of the Durmitor crown, on which the precious stones of 2500m high peaks are sparkling, are ahead of us. Here, we give you a chance to prepare yourself in advance for those kilometres, revealing you a secret: collect them carefully and slowly, since you will not spend them for years. And look back as much as you can, since here that what is left behind is equally magnificent as that rushing towards us.

About a kilometre and a half from Sedlo we can refill the water supplies at the spring called Studenac (on the right below the road, marked by a signboard). And when puffed-out and exhausted from the happy experience which has spilled on us

we go past the root of the Stožina Peak, until a little town of Žabljak there are slightly more than 11 enjoyable and „hovering“ kilometres still left. (From the Sedlo pass it is 15km away). At 6km from the saddle we go past a camp with cabins. Until Žabljak again we will be rolling along the boundary of two empires: on the left, sharp teeth of Durmitor, on the right gently rolling, vast pastures on the plateau of Sinjavina. The last 5km we ride along the main road from Nikšić (the traffic is not so heavy to considerably bother us) and it will finally take us in Žabljak (1454masl).

It is a sin to leave Žabljak, the highest urban settlement in the Balkans, on the same day - at the website www.zabljak.montenegro.travel look why...

We will head east, along the asphalt road to Đurđevića Tara and Pljevlja at which the traffic can be heavier in peak tourist season, but it should not be to the extent which would annoy us. That road easily and calmly winds through Tepačko polje and the green plateaus of Durmitor, and we will ride along it to the turn-off for the village of Njegovuđa (10.5km from the centre of Žabljak, 1300masl). There we abandon the TT2 Route which proceeds straight on, towards the Tara River Canyon.

A little before the centre of the village there is a junction (2.5km from the main road) at which we will turn left (from here we will calculate further distances), and start our fifty kilometres long travel over the plateau of Mt Sinjavina.

The space we will enter is quite sparsely populated, and only in the form of katun sites. And only from late spring to the end of the summer we can expect to find someone in katuns. The mobile phone signal does not cover most of Sinjavina and along the way we will go past just a couple of springs (on the first and the last third of the travel). All this one should bear in mind and bring along food and water for at least one day.

Before continuing towards the remote Kolašin, it is worth considering a very lovely detour to

Zminičko jezero (the Zminica Lake), only 3km away. The road to there is stunning (in one section it even leads through the forest of golden pine) and in the lake reed and on the water lilies a thick layer of tranquility lies. In the surroundings of the lake there are discreet weekend cottages and plenty of beautiful places for camping (one only should bring along water and food). We approach the lake along an asphalt road which forks right, some three hundred metres after the above mentioned junction.)

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 Morača River, this vast, rolling limestone plateau with few forests, formed by glaciers and erosion, represents the largest massif in Montenegro (40km in length, 15km in width) and it is also practically the biggest Montenegrin pasture. It follows other Dinarids, 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, Morača, Tusiinja and Bukovica), and adorned with two mountain eyes: Zminičko jezero (the Zminica Lake, in the vicinity of Njegovuđa) and Zabojsko jezero (the Zabojs Lake, above a section of the Tara River Canyon called Dobrilovina).



The roads are mainly solid macadam, although we will often come across the shorter poorer sections as well (less rolled macadam road 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.

About 1.5km from the junction an easy ascent to Zelena gora (the Green Mountain) (1430m) starts, through a beautiful coniferous forest. After 4km we leave the forest and reach a vast „bowl“ near the scattered hamlets of Pribranci and Đedovo Polje (the Grandpa's Field). The surroundings is very beautiful here, and a ride along a narrow, empty asphalt road feels good any time of the day. From the first third of the field a 9km long, gradual ascent towards the village of Gomile starts.

Along the way, in the village of Studenci, we reach the end of the asphalt road (11.5km from Njegovuda, 1610masl) and continue along a solid (occasionally poorer) macadam road. About 700m farther is an excellent spring (on the left by the road) the village was named after. About a kilometre further (13km from Njegovuda) we turn right, onto the road towards Gomile.





The end of the ascent is at 1730masl, on the pass from which we descend in the nearby little village - several stone houses with a tin roofs (15.5km from Njegovuđa). Nevertheless, so little as it is, once Gomile was proud of its title of the highest permanent settlement in the Balkans. Now during the long and hard winters no one lives here, so the title has gone somewhere else too.

We descend to the vast Šaransko polje (the Šaranci Field) (1640masl), below two peaks the names of which are maybe the world-briefest description of winter conditions ruling a place: Veliki and Mali kurozeb.

A proposal for another worthwhile detour: a visit to Zabojsko jezero (the Zabo Lake), the hidden pearl of Mt Sinjavina. The macadam path which leads there forks off in the field,

on the left at the junction below Kurozeb, 17km from Njegovuđa. From there to the lake there is 10km. From Zabojsko jezero along a forest road one can rapidly descend onto the asphalt road which through the Tara River Canyon leads towards Mojkovac (in the area called Dobrilovina, also 10km).

We leave Šaransko polje along a 1.5 km long ascent which beside the secluded remains of a large stone house (19.5km) takes us at the junction at Ploče (20km from Njegovuđa, 1700masl). There we again meet the TT1 Route, which comes from our right, and proceed left to the southeast, slowly descending into Kričačko polje.

The terrain is still clad in a decent grassy suit, but it is in many spots frayed and worn-out, so that behind the patches a „lining“ of rough rocks peeks all



around. It is a deserted area, only occasionally we will go past a forgotten household or katun. The scenery is unusual and exceptional: a labyrinth of low, craggy 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.

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 immense high sea looks like. Enormous 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 thro-

ugh 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.

In Kričačko polje we will go past another stone ruin (22.5km from Njegovuda). Then another hill, and there we are in the next valley called Staračko polje (The Old Men Field). At the beginning of it there is the Ročanin katun (26km from Njogo-



vuda, 1640masl) which is active from 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. Besides, at the little concrete building on the hillock above the katun we can receive a mobile phone signal. (The Rovčanin people will explain in us where precisely one should stand – the reception zone is usually a few metres long:)

After Staračko polje and above the katun called Podstarac we leave (but not for long) the TT2 Route which goes to the south (32km, 1740masl), while we proceed straight on, along a short, steep ascent in the direction of the east. On the peak of that ascent we will find ourselves in the attic of Mt Sinjavina, that is to say on the highest point of our crossing over that plateau

(1780m), and further on only a decent up-and-down riding is ahead of us - there will not be long and difficult ascents.

We go past the Debela glava (the Fat Head) peak and turn to the south (on satellite images this area resembles the Moon's surface, including the tens of small craters and „meteors“...), then after several kilometres reach the junction at which the spring called Smrdan (the Stinking)(43km, 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 TT1 Route, which comes from the right.

About 400m further there is the Vratlo Pass from which we head to a long descent into a narrow, long and stunning alpine valley of the village of Lipovo. We descend 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 serpentines of the road, slowly immersing into this extraordinary space precisely along its axis, we will enjoy a slow change of views and perspectives. The valley is from the northeastern side closed by the massif of Pekova glava Peak, Jablanov vrh Peak (2203masl), Savina greda Peak (2101masl) and Sudenačka glava Peak (1907masl), and from the western side by Šupljača 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 serpentines we go past the spring called Ropušica

(5km from the pass). The descent is gentle further ahead, and at 7.5km from the pass (51km from Njegovuda) 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 Hajdučka pećina (the Hajduk Cave), a great place for a break.

Our long descent from Sinjajevina ends by reaching the Mojkovac - Kolašin – Podgorica main road (930masl, 62km from Njegovudja, 18km from the Vratlo pass, an elevation loss of 810m in comparison to the pass).

On the main road we will turn right, towards Kolašin. 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 Kolašin (953masl, 65km from Njegovudja).

In this little town with a population



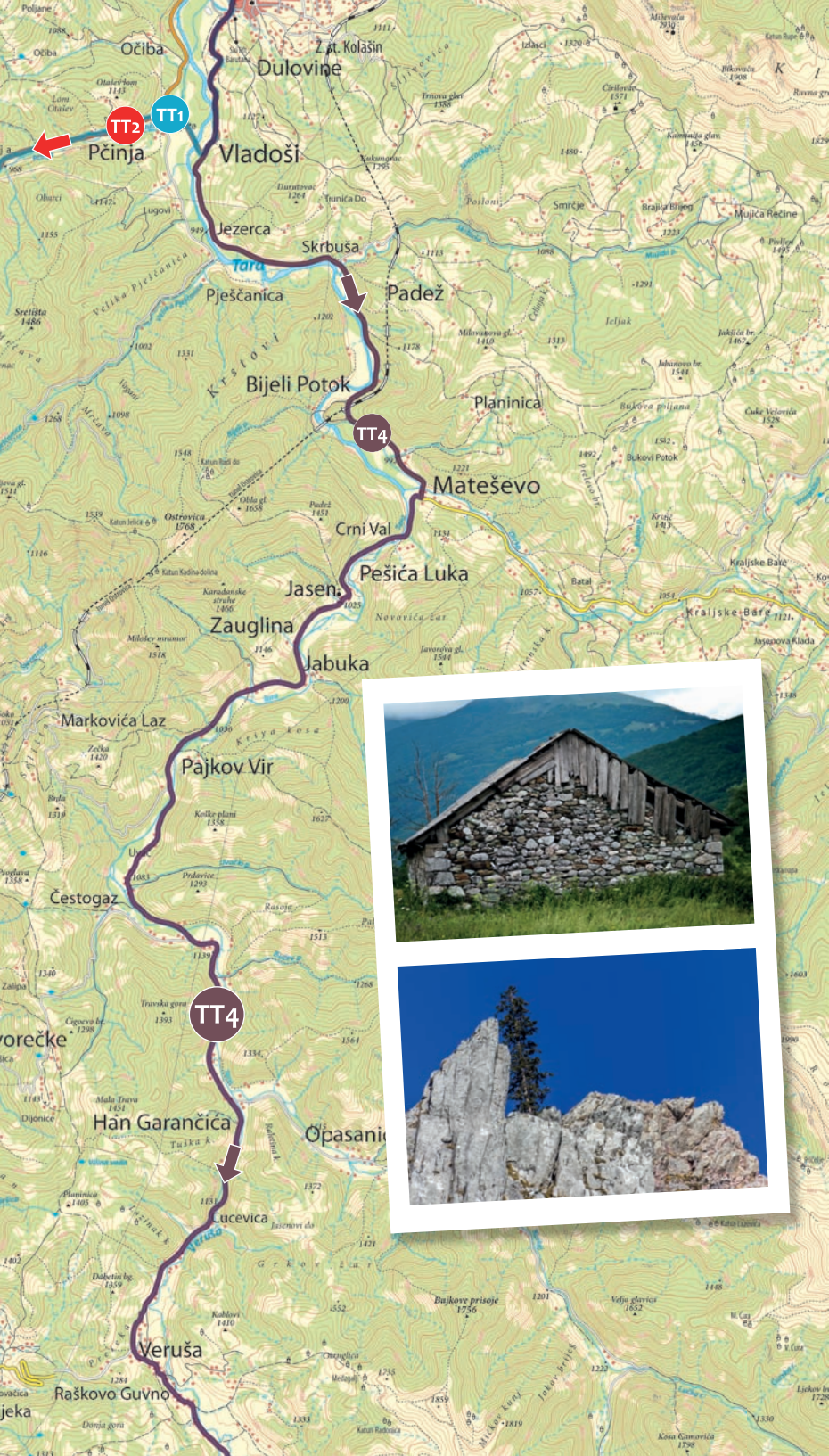


on of about 3,000 inhabitants, a former Turkish (Ottoman) caravan station on the road from the coast towards the north and the site of many battles, which is well known to be „a little-town-but-the-nice-one“ we will pass through the centre and pedestrian zone. It's definitely worth staying there for a while, to enjoy the atmosphere, restaurants and gardens of cafes, and above all, it is recommended to take part in the evening promenade. Kolašin certainly offers even more than this – from an interesting history and great botanical garden of Danijel Vincek, 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.

More on Kolašin at www.kolasin.montenegro.travel/en

4 KOLAŠIN - MATEŠEVO – VERUŠA – RIKAVAČKO JEZERO – KORITA – MEDUN – PODGORICA (90KM)

In the centre of Kolašin from our left the TT2 Route comes, but at the exit from the town we abandon both it and the TT1 Route (they go right over the new bridge on the Tara River) and continue along the young Tara towards Mateševo. The road is quiet and with a good asphalt. Winding through the shadows of beech forests in a narrow valley we go past a hardly noticeable little village of Skrbuša (6km from Kolašin, 965masl). Until after Skrbuša we ride along a flat area, then cross over Ključ hill (a kilometre long uphill section, on the other side almost identical descent) and further on the road gradually climbs.





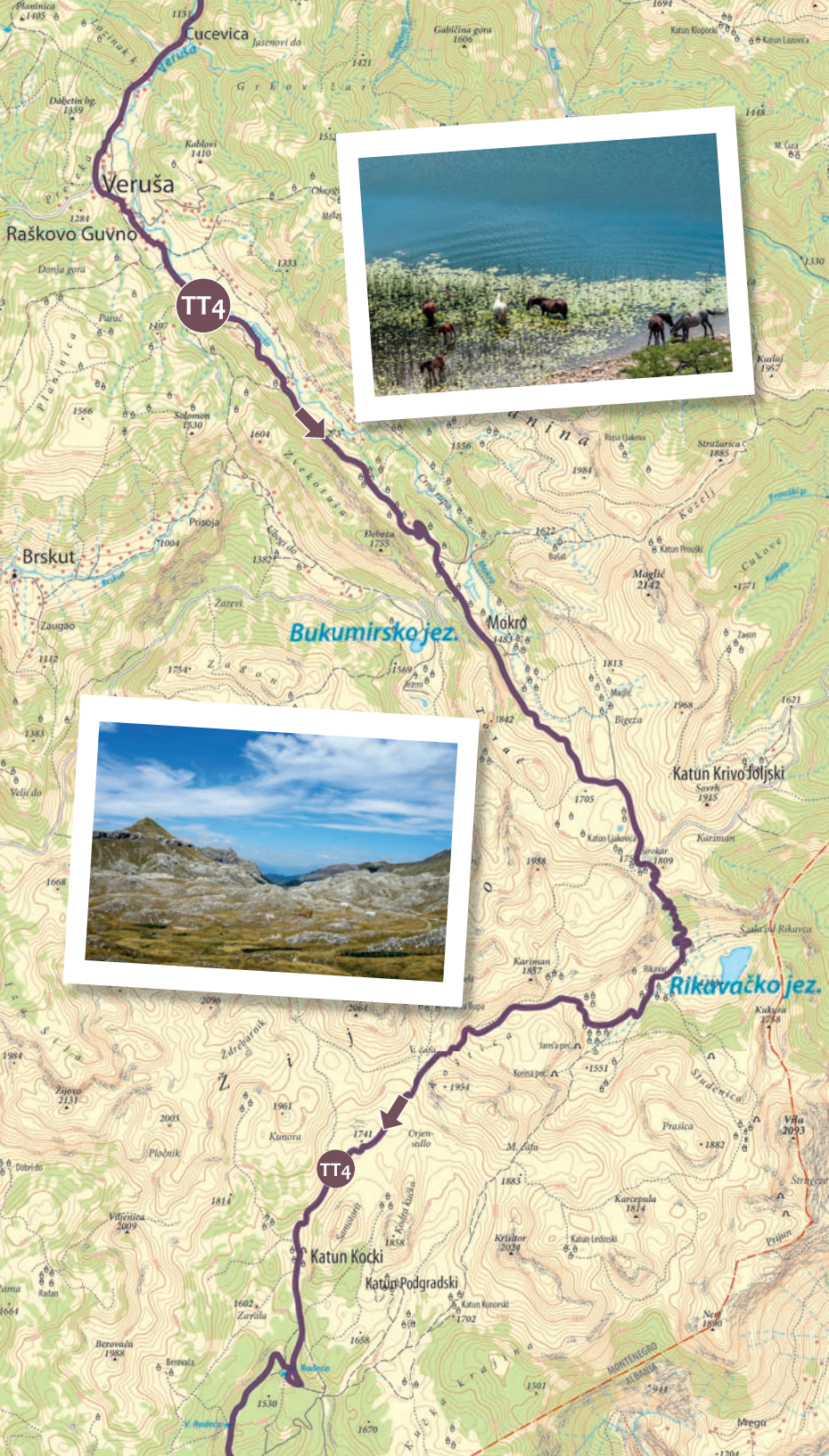
Through Mateševo (1010masl, a row of houses on both sides of the road, a pub instead of a saloon) we pass at 10km from Kolašin.

At 22 km from Kolašin in the scattered village of Han Garančića we pass a place at which to the left a minor road branches off for the valley of the Opasanica River. But here a much more important „biography“ also starts: the rivers called Veruša and Opasanica join there and form the Tara River. They both come from Komovi which are the part of the Dinaric Alps of Montenegro. The Tara River is the longest Montenegrin river (through Montenegro it flows a slightly more than 100km and then it crosses over into Bosnia and Herzegovina where it flows for another 40km before it meets the Piva River and form the Drina River). The Tara River Canyon with its 78km is the longest and the deepest canyon in Europe (1300m), and in the world it only lags behind the Co-

lorado River Grand Canyon.

And all that famous beauty and grandeur, all roar and all force, start with a quiet trickling of little rivers along which we pass now. But a marvellous shallow water of the Tara River, slender and shy, already from here possesses that special and characteristic emerald colour, it already attracts one's look like the face of a little girl in whose features a future luscious beauty of a woman is discerned.

In Veruša (26km, 1210masl, today a large weekend settlement of people from Kolašin and Podgorica) we turn left, onto the road towards Rikavačko jezero (the Rikavac Lake). A kilometre after this junction, at the last houses in the village, the ascent becomes sharper - and the asphalt road narrower and poorer. We enter a lovely forest but the left side of the road is constantly open towards the valley of the Veruša River, above which we slowly catch the height.





At 6.5km from the junction in Veruša and at an elevation of 1470masl the asphalt road ends (which anyway has not been particularly captivating) and a solid macadam road (poorer in certain short steeper sections) starts.

A little further we pass above the katun called Mokro. At 8km from Veruša (1540masl) a good newer asphalt road starts, but it immediately forks right, towards Bukumirsko jezero (the Bukumiri Lake). We will go straight on, along a steep macadam road which take us into an unreal, Mars-like landscape, in which the stone hums with that silent voice which is more felt with the eyes than with the ears. And like so many times before in Montenegro, we will be assured that the frightening beauty of such a bare landscape is – unique.

Those who have time and zeal will not make a mistake if they go to Bukumirsko jezero (the Bukumiri Lake), something less

than 4km away and 100m below our elevation). From the lake along a good and easy road one can descend into Podgorica (45km).

At the end of the ascent (12km from the junction in Veruša, 38km from Kolašin, 1760masl – 550m above Veruša), on the pass above Rikavačko jezero, there is a modest katun called Širokar - with such a luxurious view that it certainly should be equipped with an alarm, only if the vistas could be stolen. A majestic sight hides from us up to the last moment, and then it punches straight in the stomach: in a deep glacial cirque below us a dark blue mirror shines like silver framed by a magnificent massif of Mt Komovi and with the exciting peaks on the Albanian side of Mt Prokletije. In the distance on the left side the red dust of the roofs of the Albanian village of Vrmoša (Vermosh) flickers. In one continuous swing from the cirque the mighty Škalla od Rikavca (the Rikavac Col)



grows along with a stunning peak called Vila (the Nymph) – one of the most impressive in Mt Prokletije, a golden brooch on the window into the wonderful world which vibrates all around, without caring for the boundary of the earth and the sky. And that immense straining and movement towards the sky have their root, their image and haven in the dark blue water of the lake. It is hard to resist the impression that when the darkness falls and the reflexion from the water disappears, all those mighty cliffs around disappear too – until a new morning, when they will be reborn again by the play of light on the lake mirror.

Descent to the lake is about 3km long, and an elevation loss is almost 500m. Thus, steeply, and along a rather poor road (potholed and occasionally unrolled), so one should ride carefully. The beginning is the hardest so some will probably want to get off the bike there. We end the descent with a gentle braking in

the wide, amazed looks of the locals from the Rikavac katun.

The lake is about 600m long and it is located about 60m below our road – it is best approached on foot. An overnight stay is easy to organize here – there is space for a tent, and the locals will gladly give us some cabin if we want a roofed shelter. If we are planning a hiking excursion, we should keep in mind an unusual problem: during our absence the cows may totally chew up and destroy our tent...

From the place from which we have descended, another mass breaks away from the earth and flies to the heights: that is Kari-man straining towards Sovrh. The tufts of vegetation on it resemble the remains of the fur of some gigantic, mythical beast, after the bite of the identical colossus.

And here the giants are actually in a clinch: one is a paw of Mt Komovi, the other is the strong tail of Mt Prokletije. The third



party is the only one which is sympathetic towards a traveller who lost his way in this provoked battle: only there, in the broken sole of Mt Žijovo, a barely noticeable print of macadam road exists along which between Koštica Peak and Krisitor Peak one can escape the hypnotizing wrestle of stones. There is no the forth side of the world here-it is smashed long ago by a violent strike and its broken pieces certainly lie on the bottom of the blue lake water. This is a craggy area for admiration and respect, a body of a sea shell which has given birth to a pearl, and for which it is not known if it will close again all of a sudden and take away from the world a great and precious beauty it guards.

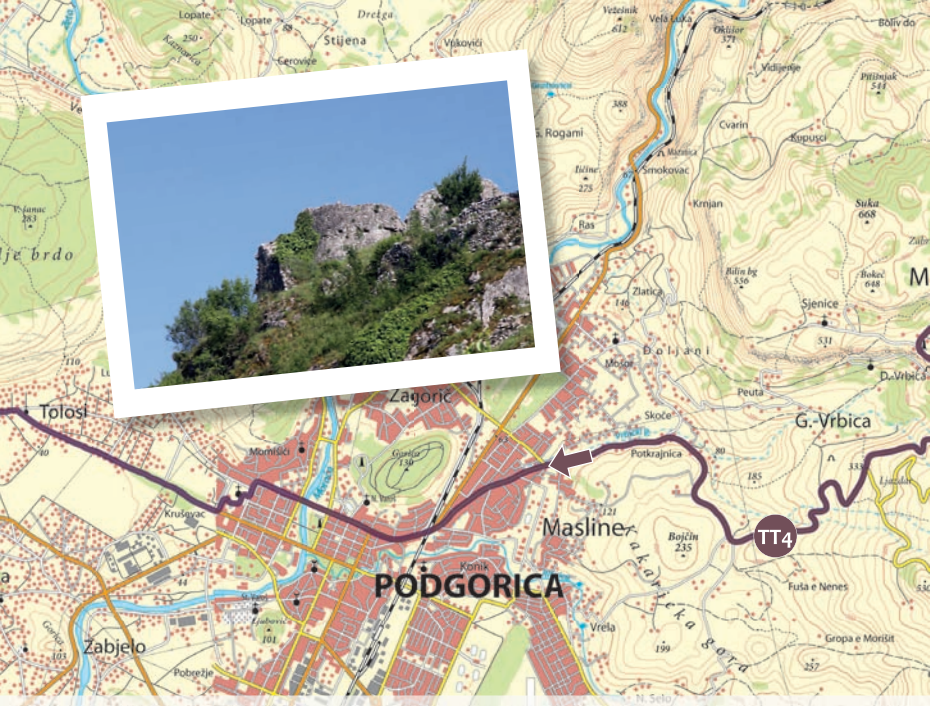
On that third side, and along that thin thread of a road, we will get out of the cirque on its southwestern side. Five kilometres of uphill section with a rough road surface, a climb from 370 to 1850masl – this is a hard ascent and we will pay with it

everything that our hearts have eaten and drunk at Rikavac.

Nevertheless, on the other hand, from the pass called Čafa (in Albanian that actually means a pass) along with a few shorter uphill sections we practically descend all the way to Podgorica – an entire 44km. Even in the Himalayas it is not easy to find such a long downhill section!

Through the last layers of the deserted bleak landscape next to the very Albanian border we immerse into a lovely forest, through which, 10km from Čafa, we will reach a large katon of the Kuči Clan called Korita (1380masl). On the way, at 6.5km from Čafa, we come across a spring called Velika Radeča.

Korita is on the Podgorica side, there an asphalt road also starts, therefore this is already a large weekend settlement. From the lake to here there is 15km, from Veruša 30km, and from Kolašin 56km.



The former panorama of the tiny smoky cabins has been cracked here under the weight of red roofs and machine cut logs, intertwined with stone according to recent fad – for pleasure, and not for need and quite crude. Mostly those whose grandfathers or fathers here used to make milk, cheese and soar milk now weekend here, therefore in Korita they are still on their land. Only now there are significantly less milk, cheese and soar milk here.

At former barrack, in the vicinity of the place at which an asphalt road starts, a former patrol trail of border guards forks left. If we head along it in about a half-hour's walk we will reach an attractive vantage point called the Falcon's Troat below which an enormous space of the Cijevna River Canyon gapes ...

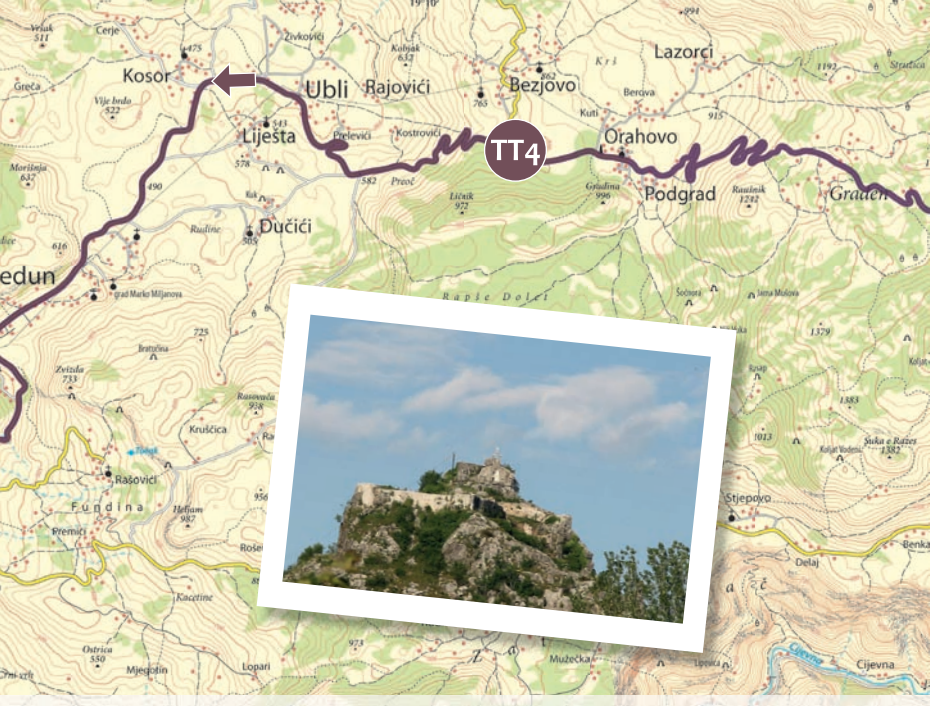
At Korita an asphalt road descent to Podgorica starts, from

sky to the ground. The intensive part will last for 17km, until a little place called Ubli (480masl), and from there we slowly lose height.

MEDUN

We reach the ancient town of Medun at 21km from Korita (480masl). The Illyrian castrum called Meteon which preceded the medieval fortress built in this place, was built between the 4th and the 3rd century BC, on an elongated rocky hillock. The Roman legions conquered it around the year of 167BC, capturing on that occasion the last Illyrian king Gentius. Although built as a fortification, Medun later also became a town, and as such it survived and developed for the entire two and a half millennia.

The Kuci vojvode Marko Miljanov (1833–1901) – an important person of Montenegrin history and even more of national culture and tradition, a legendary



fighter against the Turks and a writer who in his works described life and struggle of his clan (the Kuci Clan) in Montenegro and Albania – was born and also buried in Medun. Today his native house is the most important Montenegrin memorial museum, which is worth visiting in order to go back in an interesting, though often tragic time, and learn about local life in the 19th century. Events from the long Ottoman (Turkish) Period decisively formed the character, mentality and worldview of Montenegrins, so neither this country nor its people today can be understood without an insight into this period of their history.

AND IT CAN ALSO BE DONE THIS WAY...

From Korita towards Podgorica one also can ride along a lovely narrow asphalt road via the Albanian-inhabited villages of Stjepovo and Deljaj. It leads along

the edge of the Cijevna River Canyon so therefore in a few places we will be able to take a good look at that huge crack as well as the peaks of Mt Prokletije above it.

From Medun the traffic slowly becomes heavier – a slow awakening and returning to reality take place while through the roar of engines we enter Podgorica, 34km from Korita.

And when at the Republic Square, at now hardly understandable 50m above sea level, we symbolically close our big circuit and get off the bike to congratulate our travelling companions (or to heartily shake hands with ourselves) it will not be easy to anchor in the everyday life after everything we have seen and experienced on this journey. If the crisis is to be a really serious one, fortunately, there is a therapy: there are another four TT Routes...

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.

National Tourism Organisation of Montenegro

www.montenegro.travel

Call center: 1300 (24h)

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