



Important Pre-Booking Information

Abingdon School  
Emerald Adventure - Slovenia  
August 2020

Dear parent or guardian,

### Abingdon School – Slovenia Trip – Summer 2020

Your son has the opportunity to take part in an adventurous school trip that we are helping your school to plan.

Adventure travel is exciting. It is a chance for young people to stretch their horizons and develop an understanding of cultures and destinations beyond our everyday world. It is an opportunity to build their self-confidence and understand more about the amazing world we live in. The educational benefits and opportunities for personal development are many indeed.

Here at STC Expeditions, we firmly believe our educational journeys and school expeditions are packed to bursting point with experiences that will change your child's view on the world. Some companies in our market like to use the phrase "a once in a lifetime trip" – we prefer to think that our trips will be the first of many incredible adventures your son will embark on throughout their lives. If we can inspire young people to travel, to explore and to celebrate the diversity and difference that exists across the planet, then we know we're doing something good.

By its very nature, however, adventure travel is more challenging and demanding than a conventional school trip. The enjoyment, excitement and educational benefit is derived, in part, from the inherent risks and challenges associated with each journey and destination. The following Parents' **Pre-booking Information Pack** is designed to enable you to make an informed decision as to the itinerary and organisations involved, and whether the trip is right for your child.

Please read it carefully and should you have any questions at all, please do not hesitate to get in touch.

Yours sincerely,



Adrian Ferraro  
Director



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## About STC Expeditions

STC Expeditions, previously known as the School Travel Consultancy, has been organising adventurous school trips and expeditions since 2006. Over the years we have helped school groups summit 6000m peaks in the Himalaya and visit remote tribes deep in the rainforest clad interior of Venezuela. Not all the trips we arrange are as adventurous as these, yet wherever we operate our key goal is to provide an exceptional educational travel experience, one that takes students out of their comfort zones, opening their eyes and stretching their global horizons in a carefully risk-assessed environment.

### Objectives

- To undertake a geography focused adventure in Slovenia.
- To take part in a range of adventure activities during your visit.
- You would like a diverse itinerary that shows all aspects of the destination – the geography, biology, language and culture.

### Trip Overview

Slovenia is an adventure-activity 'hub' nestled in eastern Europe – the perfect destination for this short and sharp, action-packed itinerary! You will see Slovenia's fantastic range of geography from the alpine peaks of the Julian Alps to smooth canyons and emerald green rivers. After some adrenaline filled canyoning or rafting, you will follow the European brown bears footprints, deep in the southern forests.

### Trip Dates

Proposed Departure date from the UK: 15<sup>th</sup> – 17<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Proposed Return date to the UK: 22<sup>nd</sup> – 24<sup>th</sup> August 2020

Please note we can only book flights a maximum of 11 months in advance of the proposed return date. Therefore, these dates may be subject to change depending on availability of flight schedules once the trip dates become available.

### Planned Itinerary

*Below is an outline of the planned itinerary. Please note, it is important to realise that the itinerary needs to be flexible. Whilst every effort will be made to follow the schedule below, in the event of political problems, airline schedule changes or environmental*

*factors, we will do our best to make your trip as enjoyable and hassle-free as possible, but it is important to EXPECT THE UNEXPECTED and be prepared to accept some slight changes. Relax and have faith in your guides – he or she will want you to see their country in a good light.*

#### Day 1 Arrive Lake Bled

Arriving in Ljubljana airport, we meet our STC Leader and transfer to Lake Bled approx. 45mins. After checking in to our hostel and a welcome briefing, we can explore the lakeside and find a restaurant to tuck in to our first traditional Slovenian dinner.

#### Day 2 Lake Bled, Vintgar Gorge

This morning after breakfast we walk around Lake Bled and hike to a spectacular viewpoint overlooking the valley. After lunch we jump on mountain bikes and cycle along forest roads, through villages and the Jelovica Plateau to reach Vintgar Gorge. The gorge is 1.6km long, carving its way through the vertical rocks of the Hom and Boršt hills and showcases its own waterfalls, pools and rapids. Finally we return to Lake Bled for dinner.

#### Day 3 Bohinj Day Hike

After breakfast we take the short journey to Bohinj, a 20km long and 5km wide basin in the Julian Alps. The Tourist Information Center in Stara Fužina is well worth a visit for its interesting exhibits on the local history, geography and flora and fauna. This is an excellent base for a day hike into Triglav National Park and there are plenty of routes to choose from to hidden waterfalls, alpine huts or along part of the Peace Trail following the footsteps of WW1 soldiers. After a day exploring, we return to our hostel on the shore of Bohinj Lake.

#### Day 4-5 Julian Alps Trek

Over the next two days we trek from Bohinj to Bovec, through the Julian



Alps. The trail winds through alpine forestry and grassy meadows, past remote mountain huts and along rocky trails to mountain tops. Here we are rewarded with incredible views over the mountain range and Mt Triglav itself. After a night in, or camping at a mountain hut, we begin trekking again to the Valley of the Triglav Lakes and on to Bovec where we overnight in a camp by the Soca River. Each day is approx. 11km and 5-6hrs of walking. Triglav National Park is rich in natural history and preserves remnants of WW1.

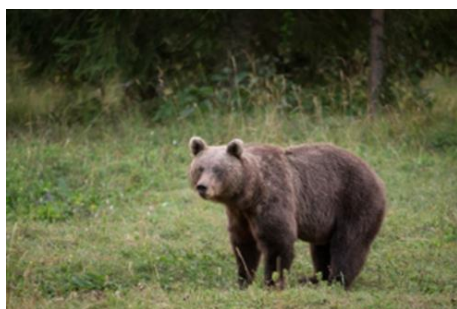
#### Day 6 Bovec, Emerald river adventure

Today the adventure cranks up a gear! We walk into Bovec from camp and check in to our hostel. After lunch we take to the water for *either*, 2-3 hours of white-water rafting on the Sava River, OR, 3 hours of repelling, abseiling and sliding down the incredible Jereka canyon! We'll dry off and head in to the charming town of Bovec for dinner.



## Day 7 Brown bear trail & Postojna cave

We rise early this morning and travel south towards the Kočevje highlands to walk the trail of the Brown Bear. There are currently 400-500 European brown bears roaming Slovenia, making it one of the highest population densities in the world. This nature walk will lead us through their natural habitat and our guide will point out where the bears stop, feed and move daily and educate us on current conservation efforts. Having climbed to a hilltop viewpoint, a traditional lunch will be served here overlooking the forestry. Next is the incredible Postojna Cave, an enormous cave system and the only cave in the world with a double-track railway line running through it! Finally we reach Slovenia's capital city, Ljubljana.



## Day 8 Depart Ljubljana

This morning we will enjoy a guided city tour of Ljubljana and its oldtown, riverside cafes, markets, art district and dragon bridge. We'll stop off at the Town Hall to learn more about how Ljubljana was voted the European Green Capital in 2016. After lunch we take our return flight back to the UK.

## Adventure Grading

We grade all our trips so teachers, school leaders, students and parents can gauge whether it is appropriate to their requirements and objectives. We have given this trip the following grading:

**Physical: Grade 3:** Moderate physical activities are included in Grade 3 trips. Good health and reasonable fitness are important to get the most out of the trip. Trips of this grading are likely to include some walking at moderate altitude (up to 2,500m) and occasional longer/harder days may be involved, with between five and seven hours of walking on certain days. The trip may contain other

activities such as cycling or rafting which also require physical effort and a reasonable level of fitness. Some steady preparation and an increase in your underlying fitness levels would help you get the most from this grade trip.

**Culture Shock: Grade 2:** Expect to find local life broadly familiar to that in the UK, however aspects of the trip are likely to be in remoter areas where differences are more profound. Whilst English may not be the native language, you can expect it to be widely spoken. There may be some cultural differences and although western palates should be well catered for there will be the opportunity to try new dishes.

## Minimum Age

We recommend a minimum age of 13 years for this trip.

## Accommodation and Meals

Accommodation used on this trip includes:

- Hostels with private dorm type rooms
- Either camping or dorm rooms in simple mountain huts with shared rooms and basic shared facilities

All meals are included on this trip from dinner on day 1 to lunch on day 8.

## Accommodation

Accommodation standards on our adventures vary from country to country. Don't expect to turn up to towels folded into swans and a neat triangle fold at the end of your toilet roll. Sometimes we have quite good accommodation. Sometimes shared rooming is exactly what it means, you could be sharing cramped rooms in bunkbeds. At the lower end of accommodation, your bed may just be a mattress on the floor in a basic guesthouse. Washing facilities may be basic with limited showers and squat toilets. It all adds to the experience though, and is part and parcel of travelling in low income countries.

**Mountain Huts:** Mountain huts in the alpine territories are renowned for their snoring, noisy and busy atmosphere. Rooms are cramped with passing mountaineers, people staying there get up in the early hours or are up in the night to get on with their journey and the food is not always the most luxurious. Soups, stews, bread and cheeses are the meals of the day.

## Environments

The environment can be the biggest challenge on an expedition. The locals are used to it, but to you it will be an alien environment and you will have to learn to adapt. This may be a struggle initially, and be uncomfortable for a few days, but give it time and you'll soon get used to it. Learn to look through any initial discomfort and look around at where you are and what you're experiencing.

**Mountains:** Mountains have their own weather systems so be prepared to experience heat, cold, wet, windy and dry – all on the same day. Walking uphill is uncomfortable, it doesn't matter how fit you are, you will be out of breath at some point and have to keep on pushing to get to the next camp. Days can be long and your thighs and bum will hurt most mornings before setting off. If at altitude (2,500-3000m+) you may feel slight effects of altitude with headaches and not sleeping well until you have fully acclimatised. All our itineraries allow for good acclimatisation. Our guides are very experienced and will be looking out for you.

## Modes of Travel

Transport on this trip will be by:

- Private coach or minibus
- Trekking

**Trekking:** This mode of transport is as old as time and is tried and tested to ensure you can absorb all the environment has to offer! Your feet, legs and back may get sore with the miles racked up so look after them! If you're carrying a bag you may get sores on your shoulders or bottom of your back due to the sweat. However, trekking can take you to amazing remote locations - places that trucks and bikes simply can't. Yes, there is a physical price to pay for the great rewards but you will have earned the feeling of accomplishment afterwards. A great bonus is that often you're away from light pollution and the stars will be utterly fantastic!

## What's not included?

The cost to the school is £1,590 to £1,500 per person (depending on numbers) but this does not include the following, which the school may have added an additional fee for:

- Transport to airport in UK
- All drinks other than water (advice will be given on purification of water)
- Visas if required (see country information for more details)
- Any required inoculations
- Personal spending money – to cover souvenirs, postage, snacks, drinks, optional activities/entrance fees
- Tips for guides and porters €20 (optional, not expected)
- Airport departure taxes paid locally

## Country information

**Full name:** Republic of Slovenia

**Population:** 2.07 million

**Capital:** Ljubljana

**Area:** 20,273 sq. km (7,827 sq. miles)

**Official language:** Slovene

**Major religions:** Catholic 57.8%, Muslim 2.4%, Orthodox 2.3%, other Christian 0.9%

**Time:** GMT + 1 hours

**Flight time:** Heathrow to Ljubljana is approximately 2.5 hours

**Currency:** Euro

### Country Overview

Slovenia is a small country in Central Europe, but encompasses everything from Alpine mountains, emerald-green lakes and rivers, thick forests, historic cities to an Adriatic coastline. Distances are short so you can swim in the sea in the morning and climb mountains in the afternoon!

Slovenia was part of Yugoslavia for most of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Unlike Croatia or Bosnia-Herzegovina, Slovenia's independence from Yugoslavia was swiftly won with relatively few losses. The country also found the transition from a state economy to the free market easier than most. In the early 21<sup>st</sup> century, Slovenia integrated economically and politically with western Europe, joining NATO as well as the European Union in 2004.

### Geography

Topographically diverse, Slovenia is made up of portions of four major European geographic landscapes – the European Alps, the Karstic Dinaric Alps, the Pannonian and Danubian lowlands and hills, and the Mediterranean coast. Slovenia borders Austria to the north and Hungary to the far northeast. To the east, southeast, and south, Slovenia shares a border with Croatia. To the southwest Slovenia borders Italy and it has a short (46 km) coastline at the Adriatic Sea between Italy and Croatia. Slovenia's highest peak is Mount Triglav, at 2,864 metres (9,396 feet). In a vale beneath Triglav lie idyllic Lake Bohinj and Lake Bled. Slovenia's flora and fauna reflects the country's physiographic diversity, especially its varying elevations. Several animal species have been given protected status including the reintroduced (though still rare) ibex, the European brown bear, the chamois, the wild boar, and red, fallow, and roe deer as well as standard varieties of small game.

### Climate

Slovenia's weather is influenced by the Alps and the Adriatic Sea, it has a Mediterranean climate on the coast, and a continental climate in the plateaus and valleys to the east. Central and northern Slovenia have a continental "cool summer" climate; the eastern third of the country also falls into the continental category but has warm summers. Monthly summer rainfall in the cool belt is more than 3 inches (80 mm), and high temperatures average in the upper 60s F (about 20 °C), although there are uncomfortable hot spells. The east and northeast have much less overall precipitation, and midsummer highs reach well past 70 °F (21 °C). From November to February, temperature readings below freezing occur frequently, but snow cover has become less frequent and usually melts rapidly.

For more detailed information on Slovenia's climate, please visit the World Meteorological Organization (WMO) website on following link:

<http://worldweather.wmo.int/en/country.html?countryCode=SVN>

### Culture

Slovenes enjoy a wide-ranging cultural life, dominated by literature, art, and music. Little of the Slovene culture is known outside the country, however, a few Slovene artists have attained international recognition. Easter and Christmas are major holidays in Slovenia. Summer in general is also a festive time with the Ljubljana Summer Festival in July and August drawing large crowds to its music, theatre, and dance performances. The Kravji Bal ("Cows' Ball") in September celebrates the return of the bovines to the valleys. Folkloric festivals are held in the towns of Kamnik and Škofja Loka.

Traditional Slovene dishes include different type of sausages, among them are krvavice (blood sausages). Other mainstays are pršut (cured ham), cheeses, and desserts such as the gibanica, a layered pastry made with various fillings. Mushroom dishes of all kinds are popular.

For more information see [www.guide.culturecrossing.net](http://www.guide.culturecrossing.net)

### Regulations and Red Tape

A full passport, valid for the proposed duration of your stay, is required for travel to Slovenia. No additional period of validity beyond this is required. However, if the UK leaves the European Union with no deal, the passport validity rules for travel to most countries in Europe will change from 29 March 2019. Holders of UK & IRL passports do **NOT** require a visa. Nationals of all other countries should contact their local embassy or consulate. Information can also be found on [www.travcour.com](http://www.travcour.com).

### Foreign Office Advice

You should familiarise yourself with up to date Foreign Office advice for travel to Slovenia. This is available on their website: [www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/slovenia](http://www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice/slovenia). This site contains useful information about safety and security, health and entry requirements.

## Travel Insurance

We have arranged specialist group medical travel insurance for all our clients. This includes cover for all activities featured as part of your trip. Full details of cover and conditions will be in the Policy Document, available upon request approximately one month before departure. The example cover and limits shown below apply to each Insured Person. This policy is primarily to cover emergencies overseas. It does NOT include cancellation cover. We encourage you to insure the value of your booking in terms of pre-departure cancellation costs. This may be covered already on your school or each family's travel insurance policy. It is each individual's responsibility to insure possessions when travelling with us, if you require cover for this.

Sums Insured	Up to	Excess
24 hr Emergency Medical, Repatriation Expenses	£10,000,000	£75
In Patient Hospital Benefit	£200	Nil
Criminal Injuries	£5,000	Nil
Personal Liability	£2,000,000	£250
Personal Accident	£25,000	Nil
Travel Delay - Delayed Departure or Arrival after 8 hrs	£100	Nil
Cancellation due to Delayed Departure	£2,000	Nil
Hi-jack of Aircraft	£3,000	Nil
Interruption of Transport	£300	Nil
Legal Expenses	£25,000	£250

**Please Note:** Any medical expenses incurred overseas if travelling against medical advice, or to obtain medical treatment, or after a terminal prognosis has been made will be excluded from cover whilst travelling overseas. Any medical expenses not verified by a medical report are also excluded.

## Health Information and Vaccine Advice

Shortly after booking, all our groups receive a trip specific health and vaccination briefing letter from our medical advisor. If you want to look up the latest health advice and recommended vaccinations for your destination prior to booking, please visit the TravelHealthPro country specific website on the following link: <https://travelhealthpro.org.uk/country-details.php?cnt=198>

## Venture Provider

STC Expeditions is the venture provider for this trip, holding overall responsibility for safety and operations.

## Leader Team

The Leader team for this expedition will be made up of:

**STC Leader:** An experienced expedition leader will accompany the group when in country. By using leaders from your destination, we ensure our clients get the best possible in-country experience. Students and teachers regularly tell us that our leaders are a vital part of the success of our trips, providing an invaluable insight into local customs, history, flora, fauna, geography, politics and much more. They also have detailed

knowledge of the local environmental and safety issues that groups could potentially incur and are thoroughly trained by us in their responsibilities and emergency procedures. The STC leader has overall responsibility for directing the logistics of the trip and ensuring the safety of each and every person participating.

**School Leader Team:** This is made up of a minimum of two teachers, one of each gender (if a mixed group). The school leader team support the STC Leader in aspects of pastoral care issues of participants and the implementation of school policies and appropriate guidelines.

## Pre-departure information

In the build up to your trip, we will be providing detailed information and training sessions to enable participants to plan and prepare as thoroughly as possible for this trip. This information will include advice on:

- Confirmed travel arrangements
- Health & hygiene advice
- A comprehensive kit list
- Culture & history of your destination
- Sources of further information about your destination

- Passport and visa requirements
- Trip specific vaccination and medical advice from Travel Health Consultancy Ltd.
- Money matters including, if appropriate to your trip, fundraising ideas and entrepreneurial schemes
- Language – basic phrases
- Expected fitness requirements (a training programme will be available on your booking page)
- Roles, responsibilities and expectations of participants
- Responsible tourism advice and suggestions
- Code of conduct
- What to do in an emergency and emergency contact information

## Pre-travel meetings/training

**Educational Journeys:** Three to six months prior to travel, we will arrange for a parent and student information evening to be held at the school. This is a chance for us to prepare the students for the trip and ensure that everyone is happy, with questions answered and minds put at ease. At this evening, we cover the following elements:

- Passports and visas
- Safety approach and attitude
- Being open about problems
- Health & hygiene
- Personal safety
- Specific hazards related to your itinerary e.g:
  - Sun and dehydration
  - Cold weather
  - Altitude
  - Wild animals
- How to travel more responsibly
- Money management
- Packing and kit
- Responsible tourism

Depending on the size of the group and the objectives of the trip, we may split this training into one or more sessions.



## How to book

To confirm your place on this adventure, we need to have the following:

### A completed online booking form:

This collects personal contact details, next of kin, passport and medical information. If under 18 years of age, this form **MUST** be signed by a parent or guardian **AND** the student travelling. It is important that the booking form is completed in a prompt timeframe to enable our medical advisor to give initial clearance for all participants to join the trip. Should we have any questions regarding medical conditions, we will contact the parent/guardian for more information.

To complete our booking form, go to [www.thestc.co.uk](http://www.thestc.co.uk) click on "Login" and then "Create an account". Follow the instructions on screen to set up your user account. When prompted to enter a booking reference, use the following code: **2020-abingdon-slovenia**

Should any of the details change (e.g. a passport needs renewing) you can log back in and change the details. You will also be able to view any trip documentation online (e.g. kit lists and pre-departure information) in the run up to departure.

**\*\*\*\* The deadline for completing the application form is: 11/10/2019 \*\*\*\***

*If we do not receive your completed application form by this date a late booking fee of £50 may be applied due to additional administration work on our behalf.*

### A deposit:

Please refer to the letter from school for details of this. Deposits should be payable to the school please, **NOT** to STC Expeditions.

## Safety & Attitude to Risk

Safety is our number priority and we take the welfare of our clients and those who work on our trips extremely seriously. We have comprehensive safety management systems in place, including areas detailed below. If you would like to know more, please ask for a copy of our Safety Management System.

**British Standard 8848:2014:** All trips and expeditions provided by STC Expeditions conform to British Standard 8848:2014 (a specification for the provision of visits, fieldwork, expeditions and adventurous activities outside the United Kingdom) as declared by The Young Explorers' Trust on the basis of the operating procedures and safety management systems evidenced on 24th January 2017 and a sample of ventures examined to the year-end 2016.

**Trip selection:** Each journey and expedition has been tailor-made and researched with school groups in mind.

**Leaders:** Each trip is accompanied by a full time professional leader, trained in first aid, critical incident management and the complex art of managing logistics.

**Risk Assessment:** Country and itinerary specific risk assessments are provided prior to departure. In addition, your leader has the training to dynamically risk assess your journey when on the road. Group management risk assessments are provided to assist lead teachers. Copies of risk assessments are available to view should you wish to see them.

**Crisis response:** 24-hour emergency back-up and critical incident support is on hand in the unlikely event of an incident whilst overseas.

**Communication:** Each group carries satellite, radio and/or mobile communications as your itinerary and terrain demands, ensuring communication is possible in all situations.

**Accommodation & transport:** All accommodation and transport are risk assessed and checked by local operations teams. Minimum requirements for vehicle standards and driver hours are enforced through contractual agreements with our in-country partners.

**Insurance:** £5,000,000 public liability insurance is in place and personal travel insurance covering medical treatment

and emergency repatriation is included for all those travelling.

### Pre-travel screening:

All travellers are medically screened to ensure they are fit and healthy to undertake your chosen journey.

**Foreign Office Advice:** All tours and expeditions are run within Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) travel advice. FCO advice is monitored daily and tour operators have the resources to react quickly should that advice change.

**Pre-trip training:** Students and staff are given the necessary training and skills to safely undertake each journey. Some of this training is provided by us, some by external companies as necessary.

**Evacuation:** We have an emergency evacuation plan in place for each day of the trip, detailing the nearest medical facilities and places of assistance. Whilst helicopter evacuation is theoretically possible in Slovenia, in reality it is often quicker to evacuate casualties by minibuss or ambulance. As such, typical time to medical help (other than first aid) can be in the region of **2 hours** on a trip such as this. If you would like to see a copy of our emergency evacuation plan then please get in touch.

**Declaration of Risk:** Ventures that include adventurous activities involve exposure to accepted elements of risk, challenge and adventure greater than those normally encountered in everyday life. Whilst such activities provided by STC Expeditions are subject to exacting safety management processes, it cannot be guaranteed that all possibility of resultant injury to participants, or others, is eliminated.



## Deposit and Payment Plan

The deposit for this trip is: £300 per person. In line with our Booking Conditions, the following is our standard payment plan for most trips, but please refer to the school letter detailing the specific costs and payment schedule for this particular trip.

- 30% of the trip costs are to be paid by 360 days prior to departure.
- 50% of the trip costs are to be paid by 180 days prior to departure.
- 80% of the trip costs are to be paid by 120 days prior to departure.
- 100% of the trip costs are to be paid by 75 days prior to departure.

## Financial Protection

All the flight inclusive tours and expeditions offered by STC Expeditions are financially protected by the ATOL scheme. Our ATOL license number is 11054. On booking, the school will be supplied with an ATOL Certificate. Please see our booking conditions for further information or for more information about financial protection and the CAA website for more details on the ATOL Certificate: <https://www.caa.co.uk/ATOL-protection/Consumers/About-ATOL/>



## Booking Conditions

By booking a place on the trip, you confirm that you accept our booking conditions which can be found on our website at the following address: <https://www.thestc.co.uk/assets/uploads/general/The-STC-Group-terms-and-conditions-v-4.pdf>

## Relationship with the School

When we run an overseas trip for a school we contract with the school for the delivery of the travel arrangements and any pre-trip programme. We also contract directly with the parents/guardians through our terms and conditions which govern responsibilities of both parties, cancellation policies, changes and liability. Therefore, in terms of health and safety, we work in partnership with the school's Senior Management and/or Head Teacher. This means that we also work with the school's Operating Authority, (if applicable) meaning the trip is signed off by an external body.

## How to contact us

We love to talk travel. If you have any questions about this information or want to know more about us as a company then you can find us here:

STC Expeditions  
Unit 6B, King St Business Centre  
Exeter  
EX1 1BH

Or telephone via: 01392 660056  
For email: [schools@thestc.co.uk](mailto:schools@thestc.co.uk)  
And Web: [www.thestc.co.uk](http://www.thestc.co.uk)

