

TOP BIKING TRAIL 2
NORTH DISCOVERIES

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 TT2 Route – we will be glad to post them at the website www.tt2.bjelasica-komovi.me.

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Texts, technical assistance:

Jovan Eraković - Jone

Elevation profiles:

Jovan Nikolić

Photographs:

Montenegro National Tourism Organization, Jovan Nikolić, Jovan Eraković, Željko Madžgalj

Design and maps solutions:

Jovan Nikolić

Routes tracing performed by:

Tane Minić

Maps:

Ministry of Sustainable Development and Tourism of Montenegro

ELEVATION PROFILE



SIGNPOSTING



ROUTE CHARACTERISTICS

Duration: 5 - 8 days Length: 390 km Total climb: 9600 m Highest point: 1923 m Lowest point: 210 m





Top Biking Trail 2

North Discoveries

From remote deserted borders to sophisticated evening promenades. Descent into the basements of Montenegro and epic ascents to the clouds, along the highest roads in Montenegro. The bridges which contemplate and the bridges which unleashed from human experience. Collecting the ethno villages. Ride in the crown of Mt Durmitor. Ride in the crown of Mt Bjelasica. The Montenegrin monasteries, the Russian nuns. Visit to a traditional shopping mall. Enjoying a kafiloza (coffe and loza (Montenegrin brandy)). From canyon to canyon, from vista to vista, day after day - to close our open circles...

Completing the TT2 Route (as well as the other Top Trail Routes) is not easy. Nevertheless, 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 you set off it's good to know:

Basic information regarding the route:

- · the length: 390km
- the duration: 5-8 days
- the highest point: 1923mnv (the Velika Čkala pass on Bjelasica)
- the lowest point: 210mnv (the Sjevernica Stream Valley, near the Morača River Canyon.)

The route can 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 some sections it is recommended to ride in a group, 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 Top Trail 2 Route is fully marked with signposts, but we strongly recommend you to download the GPS data (track logs and waypoints), which will make navigation on the route easier and safer, from

the website www.tt2.bjelasicakomovi.me. On the mountain and forest roads the distance between junctions is sometimes only a few tens of metres, so in such cases on a 400km long route it is impossible to give the distance from the start precisely enough: if we only pass the bends in a different manner.our speedometer at the end may show a few kilometres of difference in relation to the values given in this text. Therefore those values should be taken as guidance only, and for an accurate and easy navigation on the route the best solution is the offered GPS track log.

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. On the tour we will also pass some sections on which the traffic might be heavy, especially in peak tourist season (Žabljak -Đurđevića Tara - Kosanica, Bijelo Polje - Ribarevine, Kolašin - Crkvine), so one should ride carefully along those roads.

Let's go then – there's a long road ahead of us!



NIKŠIĆ - GOLIJA - PIVA **CANYON - KOMARNICA -**DUŽI - SEDLO - ŽABLJAK (149KM)

From the roundabout in the centre of Nikšić (630masl) we head in the direction of northeast, along Njegoševa Street. The TT2 Route in this section coincides with the TT1 Route. After 1km we will turn left onto II Dalmatinske Street. It soon continues as Nikca od Rovina Street, and then as Glibavački put (Glibavački Road). Upon reaching the bank of the town's favourite, the Bistrica streamlet, we will follow it through the guiet streets of the suburb, and past the graveyard and the Church of the Saint Archdeacon Steven (on the left), leave the town.

From the left the cuddly Zeta River now sneaks up on us – we will cross it at 6.5km from the centre - along one of the stone bridges Nikšić is adorned with, cutting the main road to Plužine. Immediately after the bridge we proceed right, along a very quiet road via the villages of Zavrh and Miločani. Until Zavrh the Zeta River has already fully familiarised with us, so it gently approaches us to our very feet. If it is morning, the ride along this road will be a wonderful beginning of a day. If the sun is at its zenith, it would be best to sit somewhere by the bank, make a long break and have lunch. If it is late afternoon, we will sneak up on night in the very best way. And those who try hard to do that won't have time to continue the travel, so then they can also happily spend the night amidst the murmour of water.

Travellers who want to stay for

a while in Nikšić (for which there are certainly good reasons since in the second-largest Montenegrin town, the town of "beer and steel", there are lots of things to be seen) will find necessary information at the web address www.niksic.montenegro.travel. If we need help or bike repair, the right address is the Perun Biking Club.

At the entrance to the village of Vir (12.8km from Nikšić, 645masl) we will go past an interesting, deep water cauldron on the clear stream called Sušica the village was named after it. After Vir we will venture into discovering one of the least known and visited parts of Montenegro. There is a 60km long crossing over Mt Golija and the region along the border with Bosnia ahead of us - an experience which, considering the ascent and the terrain, can easily be extended to the next day. Certain deserted and remote sections are also ahead of us, so before continuing we should check the essentials. Batteries in a GPS device and mobile phone? A pump? Tools? A torch? (A sack of potatoes and a couple of buckets of milk?)

In the centre of Vir we turn left, and start an ascent along an asfalt road which will last for the next 19km and bring us at an elevation of 1360masl. One should push hard immediately... We slowly tackle the hill below the mighty cone of Viroštak which rises on the left. At 7.2km from Vir there is a nice opportunity for a break, a pub called Duški klanac. It is one of those small houses, carelessly put together, which as if they are pressed by something inexorable on their sides, so their red roof, small terrace and some unprovoked



small window with a grid have jumped up. Then, when on something like that a proud name is stuck (in the Montenegrin villages luckily people still are not the slaves to the fad to name the pubs after the Rome, Paris of Vienna restaurants), when a couple of tables and chairs (not obligatory) and something a bit like a bar are provided – the business may be launched. Well, then we have to stop off here, to refresh ourselves with cold water, drink something with the locals and hear the news from the neighbourhood. It doesn't matter if we are foreigners and we don't speak the language: information is here absorbed through the skin.

At 8.3km from Vir, in a rocky, karst area below Presječka kula

we abandon a wide asphalt road which goes towards the distant Bosnian little town of Gacko. and turn right, onto a macadam road. The next 6 kilometres, due to a steep ascent and poor road, will be the hardest section of the Golija odyssey. We will slowly advance below the wonderfully risen, yet rough rocks of Visoka greda and Odžina greda, until we reach our prize: an entrance to the magical valley of Nozdra. From a small mountain pass as through a keyhole we gently descend to a few kilometre long piece of mountain poetry: a soft, flower covered green carpet, the waves of bright grass that run through a circled space which sneaks in among the fierce storm of rocks. A piece of unexpected tranquility and impossible beauty, which survives



between the violent boiling of hills on the left side, and the bare shrew of the Golija crown on the right. A few katuns the dry, cracked walls and snow-gnawed roofs of which with the utmost effort endure above the ground. And a huge, opposite to proportions and size of everything else in the valley arranged, somehow built in the Inca style... rainwater tank. In this remote corner of the world, above all those flowers and all that grass, a stone construction, which in terms of its skilfully processed and precisely arranged stones is more like a remnant of some mighty fortress, reigns.

One should descend from the road which climbs along the right edge of the Nozdra Valley, and go through its centre. That way, after all, we will also come below the lower side of the rainwater tank (16km from Vir, 1200masl), from where it displays its full size and beauty. In the vicinity there is a trail along which we can return onto

the road, but one should think twice if an overnight stay in such a place is to be missed.

Getting out of the Nozdra Valley, through a narrow cirque, along the tattered stone path which with a considerable effort makes its way through up the steep slope of the rock, will be again a strenuous work. The first kilometre is the toughest, then the ascent becomes gentler, and at about 3km from the rainwater tank we reach the pass (19km from Vir. 1360masl). The road becomes better as we descend to a new wonderful dale, in which we will wind through the tall moss and burdocks. When we head up its other side. below the hill called Visoki kom (1456masl, on the right), it's worth looking back - the view from that side is even lovelier.

A solid macadam road which slowly lowers us from the mountain is on its short rather steep sections usually poor or it even gives way to rocks. And we pour ourselves from one splendid

landscape to another, from one flower meadow fly to another, hovering from resting-place to resting-place, from ex-katun site to ex-katun site.

After another steep descent around a kilometre long, there we are again on the Nikšić -Gacko asphalt road (29km from Vir, 900masl). We will turn right, towards Gacko (on the left, 700m from the junction, there are a shop and a pub in the village of Javljen), and in the next 2km we will take a rest a little bit from the bumpy travel. There are very low trees or shrubs all around the area, so we will have a good view over the surrounding rocky, rather interesting hills.

At the beginning of the 31st kilometre we start the final leg over Golija, leaving the asphalt road once again, and turning right onto a solid macadam road. From the southwestern side of the mountain, at which the vegetation is low and there is plenty of open space, it will take us to its wooded and misterious northern side. We start a second big ascent after Vir: in the next 16km we will climb from 930m to 1600masl.

The first part of the ascent leads along a broad bottom of Višnjića do (a dale). It is a typical "pot", enclosed at all four sides of the world (or some ten sides of the world, which this karst labyrinth usually has) with craggy hills covered with low vegetation. All that resemble the interior of the Dalmatian islands, so the lovers of such lanscapes will feel at home.

On the other side of the dale, a steeper section of the ascent starts, and the road will be slightly poorer. In the hamlet of Potkraguj (4.8km from the asphalt road), to which we ascend along a short, steep uphill section, we go past the entrance door of a stone house – here we can stop off for a coffee even without getting off the bike. However, the host is in his golden years and he hears poorly, so there won't be a lot of conversation - or it will seem more like a quarrel (A sip of coffee/ a bit of shouting/ a sip of coffee/ a bit of shouting ...).

A rather steep ascent, more poor sections of the road, and we reach an open section from which we can see Višnjića do, now already deep below us. The brownish band of the road does not match the olive green surroundings here, and in that disharmony, like a deep scar, it tortures a bare slope of the hill before vanishing in the forest again.

A few more ravines and sections in which the crags and large unrolled rocks peek out are still ahead of us. It will be better from the junction, 9.3km from the asphalt road, at which we turn right and join a nice, even macadam road. In the spring, after the snows, it might happen that there is some boulder newly settled from the neighbourhood or some fallen tree on it. The ascent is not steep anymore, so we will decently fast advance towards the pass. In a few places the forest will clear up and lovely views will stream towards us.

Around 16km after leaving the asphalt road we reach a discreet pass (1600m). From there we will ride downhill, through shadows and silence, for a long time. Through the mainly deciduous forest and a little bit



of monotony, until our 60km long adventure started in Vir ends with reaching the Nikšić - Plužine main road (1120masl, about 30km after we have left the Nikšić - Gacko asphalt road on Golija).

We just cut the main road and sideways to the left join a narrow asphalt on the old road to Plužine. A moderate uphill section a few kilometre long ends at a pass behind which a deep crack of the Komarnica River Canyon will blossom. We turn towards the northwest and start a nice descent along our deserted lane which sways along the lower side of the world: there across, above the canyon, the grim peaks of Pivska planina (the Piva Mountain) stand on guard. The ride is interesting: one moment we make our way through the strange, narrow crevices made in crags, the next moment we are in a tunnel of vegetation which cuts out both sides of the lane, narrowing it to a thin stripe, and immediately after that we reach open, wide areas.

At 7.6km from the main road and at an altitude of 1003masl we turn right, towards another of the unforgettable places which Montenegro has to offer. Those following the Top Trail 1 Route will fork off here and head towards Plužine. And we? Through the village of Rudnice, after 900m and a short uphill section, we reach a saddle on Rudnički brijeg (the Rudnice Hill) and an ethno village called Izlazak (990masl). There we will spill, in a moment, as a drop in a full glass (in a way as it should be when a beauty is about to sweep us off our feet), over the rim of a deep green goblet, on the bottom of which the blue absinthe of the river sparkles. And we will fall into that intoxicating drink faster than a glimpse, in a drinking party after which there is no hangover, just the opposite, the clear head responds to the reality. It's a sin not to stay here for some time, and someone may even sleep over – to be sure just



how justified the name Izlazak (the Getting Out) is.

A great descent along the sleeping asphalt road brings us onto the bottom of the canyon and a narrow, pensive concrete bridge of Gagović brothers (3.7km from the ethno village, 600masl). That modest sash, charmingly battered by loneliness, seems as if it is placed there not so much for the need, but rather for a wish of a constructor to offer a traveller the best platform for watching and enjoying the surroundings. There is often a haze around, as it usually happens with bridges which always contemplate about something, and below hundreds of lights flicker - an inverted reality in water is lovelier than the real one, and even though the ground can soften under our feet because of that, who cares? Our head will firmly rest on reflections of clouds on the water. Nevertheless, we will use the bridge for crossing to the other side too, not only for the romantic thoughts in the silence. And on that other side a new "epic" ascent is ahead of us: first almost 5km to the edge of the canyon (1020masl) and then another 6km to behind the village of Bezuje (i.e.to Zmijski krš, 1350masl). A total of 11km of sweating and, who would say it enjoyment. Well, so inspiring will be the rebirth and expansion of the world in our personal "Big Bang " started at the bridge. So beautiful will be skating through just created, impetuous heights, through distances which only learn to be that, although on their other shore little wooden structures of the ethno village already irreversibly go forward to some other galaxy.

At 8.3km from the ethno village we reach the Bezuje - Dubljevići junction and continue straight on, towards Bezuje. From here to after the Nevidio Canyon our route will coincide with the Top Trail 4 Route, which comes to us from the left.



We pass a modest little village of Bezuje (9.5km from the ethno village, 1036 masl). Soon the asphalt road ends (11.1km) and a 7km long macadam road section starts. The road follows the Komarnica River Canvon and therefore there will be lovely vantage points along it. Perhaps the best is the one at 1.4km from the end of the asphalt road (12.5km from the ethno village): for the best view one should hike a few hundred metres down the meadow below the road, to the spot below which the depth of

the canyon will "bubble" just in the right way. In the next 3km the macadam 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.

At 14.4km from the ethno village we reach the pass on Zmijski krš (the Snake's Rock)(1346masl) and start an 8km long descent towards the village of Dubrovsko (1060masl). Along the way, we will reach an asphalt road again (18km from the ethno village).

The school in the scattered village of Dubrovsko is located 30km from the ethno village. Two kilometres further there is another beautiful vantage point, and again in the place on which the road emerges to the very edge of the canyon. At 4km from Dubrovsko, near the village of Duži, we go past a wonderful church on the village graveyard (on the left from the road).

The entire leg from Bezuje to Dubrovsko is extraordinary beautiful. The first section is rough, craggy, fierceful... and the second, the asphalt road section, romantic. Tastes differ, but this section of the route many will probably list amongst the most pleasurable and, in an unassertive way, the loveliest on the TT Routes.

At 5.7km from Dubrovsko we will stop off at the grocery in the village of Duži (1066m). 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 exchange of 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 (although we don't see how that could happen after climbing out of the canyon).

Around 600m before the grocery to the right a path (and then a trail) which leads to the canyon forks off. It is an opportunity to reach its magical bottom once again, this time on foot and in the section which is narrower and rarely visited. And along with fitness, moderate weight on the bike and enough patience, even more interesting adventure is a descent to the canyon with a steel little horse by one's side, crossing to the other side along the little bridge of Duži, 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 and (again) via the Izlazak ethno village one may close the circuit to Duži. (Before the descent to the canyon one should definitely ask the locals about the condition of the trail and the very bridge.) For all this someone might

Around 1.5km after the grocery a steep descent starts again, below the magical cliff called Žuta greda (the Yellow Cliff) and towards the little bridge along which we will cross over the "craziest" part of the Komarnica River - the Nevidio Canyon (1.6km from the grocery, 1008masl). The colourful face of Zuta greda looms above us, 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 right 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 to the blue heights to which, somehow, it really belongs – more than to an ordinary earthy crush of stone and its fate to fall ...

Nevidio Canyon The Nevidbog, 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 Europe: only in 1965 the team of the Javorak Mountaineering&Skiing Association from Nikšić succeeded to pass along this about a 1700m long and a few hundred metres deep gorge, in some places so narrow that up on its top it could almost be jumped over. The canyon wildly bends while Mala (Little) Komarnica River reveals its secret foaming on its cascades and whirlpools (the elevation loss, from the entrance to the exit, is 125m). In order to see that unique yet cruel beauty, 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 special fitness and technical skills are required, but the passing is not recommended without an ad-



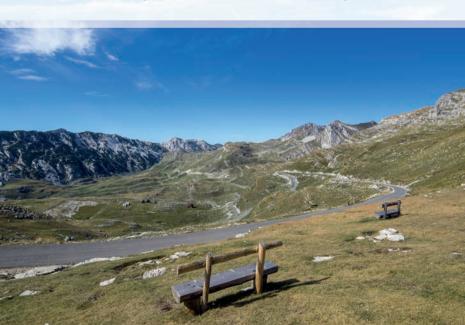
equate gear and a guide. If you wish to tackle this adventure (and you should, since those who have experienced it list it amongst the best in their life) obtain information in the nearby ethno village.

From the little bridge one can glance at the initial section of the Nevidio Canyon. Even better is the "secret" vantage point immediately after Žuta greda: it is reached along a 300m long hiking path which branches off the road to the right, about 800m before the bridge.

After the little bridge along a short sharp downhill section we reach a junction (1010masl) at which a road towards the upper section of Komarnica forks left. Our route leads right, along an asphalt road uphill section to the ethno villages called Nevidio and Jatak (1.3km from the bridge, 5.2km from the grocery in Duži, 1030masl, accommodation, two restaurants). Those who have got tired (or those who are slowly losing a battle with night shadows which are already sneaking around) will welcome a break: the ascent which we have started at the junction below the little bridge will last for almost 22km, until the Sedlo pass on Mt Durmitor (1908masl).

After the Jatak restaurant we soon descend onto a new road (the Nikšić - Žabljak main road), we cut it and continue downhill along the old Žabljak road. Three hundred metres further the Top Trail 4 Route forks right towards nearby memorial complex dedicated to Vuk Karadžić, and we will will go left. The old and the new road are playing and teasing each other while they gradually ascend to Mt Durmitor, therefore in the next 3km we will often cut a "luxurious" band of the main road, all that sticking to our narrow, cracked, timid asphalt road (partially a macadam road as well). Winding along the old road is slightly longer and slightly harder, so someone will probably change it for a ride along the main road, if there is not too heavy traffic on it.

At 3.2km from Jatak the old road finally decides to get serious and



it takes us to the left, deeper in the valley of Grabovica. The asphalt is good or solid(and mostly empty) and it bends greatly above the stream which smells the grasses and flowers on its banks.

We pass a dormant little village of Donja Grabovica with dozens of scattered houses. A little further there is a church in the "main" Grabovica (3km after leaving the main road. 1240masl) which we will take as an landmark for further mileage. From there we ride up-anddown towards Gornia Grabovica along an occasionally poor and cracked asphalt road (mainly ascending, of course). The road compensates a lack of nice "clothes" with the soul: it hops passionately and amorously through the valley, hidden, and given, well, only to us, below the rocky crests on the ridge of Boli (on the left) and Ivica (on the

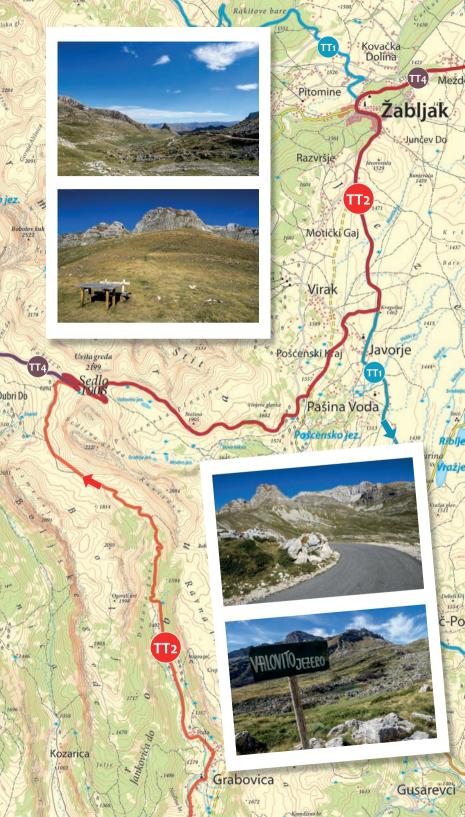
The asphalt road ends at 2.4km from the church. After a single-storey stone house on the left side (the old school) we briefly descend into a marvellous dale, following the two ruts of a macadam road (grass is in between), letting the meadows frame us and dancing on two wheels amongst the yellow dandelions (when it is their season) or amongst other yellow flowers—it seems that it is always season for something yellow in here.

We enter a beech forest and start a rather steep ascent about 200m long, to an area called Dedova gora (the Grandpa's Mountain). Behind a secluded house (on the left), a dirt road section starts. It will probably be better to proceed left here,

along a parallel road through a field, and return to a forest road at the end of the field, since from there the surface will be hard again.

Crawling amongst the titanic masses of Bolj, Ranisava and Sedlena greda peaks, and melting into the surreal perspectives we reach Grabovički izvori (the Springs of Grabovica) in which there is water all year round. Immediately before the springs there is a place from which one can take a nice look at the area around Grabovica. From here to ioining the Žabliak – Sedlo - Trsa asphalt road there are about 2km left. A kilometre before that we will have a wonderful view over the massif of Durmitor, Dobri do (the Good Dale) and the Komarnica River area. Namely, we end the strenuous macadam road ascent at the asphalt road (1830masl, about 12km from the church in Grabovica), but we have to make some additional effort before we finally make a break: we turn right and ascend to a 1.5km away pass called Sedlo (the Saddle) (1908masl). From there we will be whipped by a view over the two sides of the world, both so irresistable that a kind of the vertigo, caused by an unrestrained and lavish gushing of beauty through the space and time, will be inevitable. The saddle is one of the loveliest places in Montenegro and one of the two highest points to which the asphalt road can bring us (the other one is on the Stuoc Peak, at the opposite side of Durmitor and on the TT1 Route).

The elevation gain which we have tackled at a 22km long ascent from the Nevidio Canyon is 900m, and we have deserved





a rich reward which we will eniov in the next kilometres, while along a narrow and winding road we descend to an unearthly landscape of Pošćenska dolina (the Valley of Pošćenje). At its exit its landmark, its Colossus and the Faro Lighthouse - a huge and defiant finger of the Stožina Peak waits for us. But to there several more kilometres of sliding along a steep side of the Durmitor crown, on which the precious stones of 2500m tall 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 it for years. And look back as much as you can, since here that what is left behind us 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 something more than 11 enjoyable and "hovering" kilometres still left. (From the Sedlo pass it is 15km away). 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. In the last 5km we are again on the main road from Nikšić and it will finally take us in Žabljak (1454masl).

It is a sin to leave Žabljak on the same day – at the www.zabljak. montenegro.travel website look why...

ŽABLJAK - ĐURĐEVIĆA TARA - KOSANICA - BARICE TOMAŠEVO - BIJELO POLJE (95KM)

We will head east, along the asphalt road to Đurđevića Tara and Pljevlja. That road gently and calmly winds over the green plateau of Durmitor-until, 12km from Žabljak, it decides to jump into the chasm of the Tara River Canvon. It will draw us as well. on the invisible wings of its courage, to reach, deep down (but, lo, still frighteningly high above an emerald vein of the water) a magical and even braver bridge. The bridge constantly jumps over that terrible chasm from one side to another, and returns so fast that its pillars don't even wet in the Tara River. So swiftly that no one even notice that it is one moment here and the next it is not. And so, naively believing that since they have build it they master it as well, people walk that way or drive to and fro following their routine - without noticing a rapid dissappearing and emerging of concrete beneath them. Well, such is that enchanted bridge in Đurđevića Tara, the bridge which unleased of human experience and turned into a slender glaring dragon, which like a whip flogs the walls of the canyon.

On the other side (23km from Žabljak, 775masl) an ascent to the plateau of Kosanica starts. (On the right by the cabin with a cafe a steep access path forks off to nearby rafting camp, in which one can stay overnight in traditional tent-sized shephard's cabins – irresistable).The gradient in the first section occasionally reaches 10% and we will slowly gain the height on that road which we share with the motorised tourists. There will surely be an exquisite view as well, one should just look around. We will go past a few restaurants, and four kilometres from the bridge there is a spring called Vlaškovac.

We end our ascent at the gen-



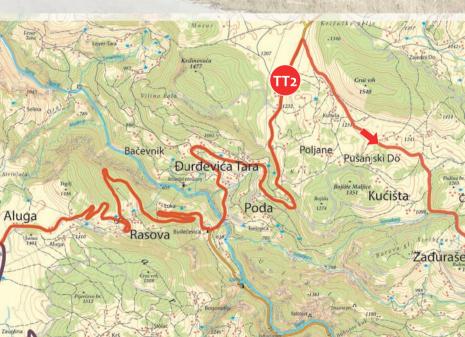
tle tray of Kosanica plateau, 10km from the bridge (1212masl, about 440m above the bridge). From the major road we turn right, onto a minor asphalt road which will take us through the area called Kričak. We progress a little bit uphill, then a little bit downhill. however, predominantly ascending. Surrounding meadows are fantastic, and landscapes exceptionally beutiful: a symphony of conifers and gently rolling meadows, with a pinch of stone - just enough to spice the feast. A real little Switzerland and one of the loveliest legs on the TT2 Route.

After the Krupica's hamlet of Golubovići (1220 masl) a solid macadam road starts, with occasional ruffled (less rolled) sections. A friendly village of Barice diligently guards a stunning valley in which it is located, and on its exit there is a pass – from it we will be able to enjoy the most beautiful view of that symbiosis. Advancing over the rough pla-

teau and through interesting, open areas, in Kameno polje we will come across an about 700m of rather poor road. On that stretch, 26km from branching off the major road at Kosanica, also a path towards a nearby Barice Monastery forks left.

At Pisana jela (31km from Kosanica), after the hamlet with several new houses and another valley from which we sneak out of, one should look back once more – at the steep wall along which we have descended and from which a dense, ruffled fleece of conifers sticks out. The macadam road gradually becomes better and wider, and it takes us through the pine forest sprinkled with glades and pastures, and through the green tunnels made of the trees by the road.

In the area called Sokolac we reach an asphalt road again (35km from Kosanica, 1230masl). Around 800m further there are a drinking fountain (on the left) and a developed vantage point





(a little cabin with a lovely terrace, 100m from the road, on the right). From there we will have an exceptional view over our next stop-off point: the village of Tomaševo, deep below, in the Ljuboviđa River Valley.

We will arrive there along a sharp, 7km long downhill section with an old asphalt road in poor condition (in places there is no asphalt at all). And we will land on the Bijelo Polje - Ribarevine – Pljevlja road (42km from Kosanica, 710masl), which one day will represent an important connection of the two

parts of Montenegro. But since the section towards Pljevlja has not been finished yet, a piece of a new and nice asphalt road towards Ribarevine at which the traffic is comfortably light, will certainly suit our fancy.

Tomaševo is a nice little place which we enter after a few hundred metres. A couple of shops and cafes, one drinking fountain, positive atmosphere – and a marvellous, vast valley around us.

The terrain towards Ribarevine gently descends so we rapidly progress past the ethno village



Vuković (4km from Tomaševo, a few hundred metres to the left from the road, a bunch of interesting wooded structures with an artificial lakelet and a large central, palace".)

A kilometre further there is a spring (on the right), and 11km from Tomaševo in the village of Slijepač Most (650masl) we pass under the stratospherically tall and like a toothpick thin bridge on the Beograd-Bar railway, and join the Bijelo Polje - Mojkovac

 Podgorica main road. We will turn left towards Bijelo Polje, and since the traffic is heavy, in the remaining 10km to there care is required.

Information on Bijelo Polje and local touristic offer: www.tobijelopolje.me. In the town there is also the Ciclomont Biking Club, in which assistance, advice and repair will be gladly offered.





BIJELO POLJE RAVNA RIJEKA - BJELASICA KOLAŠIN (56KM)

We return to Ribarevine and then, along the Ljuboviđa River, proceed to the village of Ravna Rijeka. There, by the motel of the same name (4.3km from the town, 600masl) we will turn left, to start a new big story on our travel along the TT2 Route: crossing over the mighty Bjelasica Mountain.

A quiet asphalt road takes us into the valley of Bistrica, along the right side of which we ascend to Maistorska kosa. At the end of the first kilometre the ascent becomes harder, as an introduction to the main share of "work" which is ahead of us: in slightly less than 15km from the motel to the Turijak hill above the Bielasica katun called Cmiljače, we will ascend to 1815m above sea level (an elevation gain of 1200m). The asphalt road ends at 3.5km from the motel (860masl), around 4km farther there is a developed spring of Bijela voda (the White Water). We will reach the katun on the open space below Turijak after a long and strenuous winding through the forest, and after climbing the serpentines on Lastve and on Jelova kosa.

In this katun there is a modern mountain hut (on the hillock, a few hundred metres left from the road and at an elevation of 1760masl), but it is open only on previous enquiry, that is to say the arrival should be announced. (Contact telephone number can be found at the website of TO of Montenegro, www.montenegro.travel). However, even when it is empty, the hut is a right place for a break: on the northwestern side, above the steep slopes of Petrova ravan a marvellous terrace has been hung, on which it would be wonderful to sleep over in sleeping bag, and under the stars. Awakening would then be amidst an unforgettable view which flourishes in this eagle's nest. And one may also camp on the meadow in front of the mountain hut



 anyway, if we have brought along enough water and food we can provide ourselves with a spectacular stay here.

We end the ascent from the motel about a kilometre farther, at the pass by the puddle on Turijak. In the next few kilometres we go past the eastern slopes of Turijak, pass through an interesting and picturesque katun called Omar (on the left we will see its little Church of Saint Elijah, a white earring of this area) and then we briefly ascend to the pass by the puddle on the Ogorjelica Hill (about 19.5km from the motel, 1897masl).

Around us there is a typical landscape of high Bjelasica: a rolling, soft expanse in which a glance happily lies onto fragrant grasess or it nests on some rock.

The azure heights are felt here in the pores of the skin, and an endless game between them and the ground is the only thing that determines how the world will look like in the next moment: whether it will be a magnificent, cheerful beauty, or a gloomy, cloudy cloth in which a terrible roar of thunder germinates. Both when Bjelasica is gentle and when it is furious, its immeasurable magic binds equally, it slows down the motion and the thought. Nothing here is slave to time – wind, sun and rain are the only boundaries and benchmarks of this sublime realm.

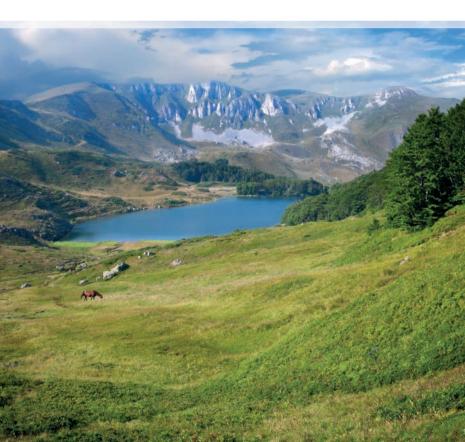
A four and a half kilometres after the pass we reach the tiny Šiško jezero (the Šiško Lake) and the local katun, huddled below Žuber Peak. The lake sends

back upwards the clouds which get tired and fall onto its water. and it also serves as a button for fastening the surrounding landscape onto the body of Bielasica. A macadam road from the shore takes us through the katun around the cabins of which there are usually plenty of flowers, and then it narrows and enters the forest on the southern end of the withered twin of the lake – the Ševarina Puddle. Here reed and shadowy secrets knit a narrow, lovely trail which after about half a kilometre (26km from the motel) brings us onto the road for katun called Suvodo, on the left below us. We will not go that way, but straight on, into a glacial cirque beneath the immense rock of Reljine, through which we must push hard steeply uphill, to Jusin brijeg (the Jusa's Hill). We will

struggle with slope and a poor road – but that way we will conquer a passage to a new sensational area.

The ascent is slightly less than 3km long, an elevation gain is 250m (from 1672 to 1917masl). On the steep northern slope of the cirque we also go past a "lair" of a large snowdrift which usually stays here until the late spring. Therefore even at the beginning of the summer it is possible that we will have to push or carry our bike a few hundred metres here.

At Jusin brijeg (28.5km from the motel) we reach the crown of Bjelasica. Within our reach there are its peaks, strung on our left side, including even the highest one, Crna glava (the Black Head) Summit (2139masl). We can climb it in half an hour and the





look from above is more than worth it. We can also quickly descend to Ursulovačko jezero (the Ursulovac Lake), or to Pešića jezero (the Pešići's Lake) which is a real gem since the nature has given everything to it: an outstanding location, shape and colour, a frame of crags on one side, counterpoint of forest and meadows on the other.

A road towards Pešića jezero (the Pešići's Lake) forks off at the junction, 30km from the motel, at an elevation of 1900m. We can ride along it about 900m and then we should leave the bike and continue on foot, along a steep path which winds downwards. From that place to the water there is about 800m. The lake is located at an elavation of 1838masl.

On the other side the picture is completely different: there a chasm opens, in which virgin forest of Biogradska gora (National Park), with a large lake hidden somewhere down in that fluffy green fur, hums. (This is a story for those who follow the Top Trail 3 Route, with which our route coincides from Jusin brijeg

to Vranjak katun).

Between those two extremes, the one above and the other below, the massive and the empty, our frail bycicle, which as if it itself spins a thin thread of macadam road and then like a brave hanging bridge it stretches it through the furies on the clash of height and depth, makes its way through and carries us. Along that hardly real vein then we are also transferred further, seemingly by a lucky coincidence - which lasts and lasts...The knitwork of the road renews in a miraculous manner. the wheels are rolling, glittering kilometres squeak under them, and we want all that never to end.

On a short descent into Jagnjčarske rupe we pass below Zekova glava Peak (2117masl), on which a large stone building of the former military facility stands. Today there is only a transmitter from which more than a half of Montenegro receives the TV signal, but the structure still impresses with its architecture and the way it fits in

with the surroundings – in that regard it is up to a mountain hut in the high Alps, or some mysterious fortress in the James Bond style films.

No less impressive Troglava Peak (2072masl) follows, and from the pass on Velika Čkala (34km from the motel, 1923masl) we start a long descent towards Kolašin. The pass is also the highest point on the entire Top Trail 2 Route.

The start is steep. A couple of lovely views over the eco-katun called Vranjak, and soon there we are precisely in it (37km from the motel, 1750masl). On this section the road grade is 12-15% and on the last section (a cracked dirt road) one should especially take care – the gradient reaches even 20%.

The katun is interesting and excellently positioned, and it has a certain historical significance as well: it was the first Montenegrin ethno village. It offers us a true image of highlanders' life a hundred and more years ago as well as a new chance to spend the night in a miniature, moveable shepherd's kabins (kućeri, torarice or pružine, as they are also called). Southeasternly from the katun, about 600m

away on the road to Trešnjevik and Andrijevica, there is a comfortable Vranjak mountain hut (electricity, water) which is always open during the summer season, and in winter only on weekends and on request/ notice.

From the katun along a solid macadam road with a gradient of about 9% we descend to the Kolašin1450 Ski Centre at Jezerine (41km from the Ravna Rijeka motel, 1450masl). A broad asphalt road starts there and our descent speeds up (we are only halfway through it...) down a narrow and beautiful valley of Paljevinska rijeka decorated by surrounding high peaks. We go past the spring called Jeremija and then also the famous Savardak restaurant (7km from the ski centre). The downhill section becomes gentle, and there we are already in the first streets of Kolašin.

Kolašin is one of the most beautiful towns in the north, and what is worth seeing in it the site www.tokolasin.me will reveal to us.



KOLAŠIN - CRKVINE PREKOBRĐE - MAGANIK MORAKOVO - NIKŠIĆ (90KM)

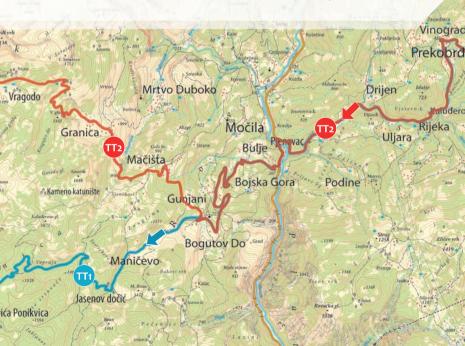
From Kolašin we continue to the south, following the right bank of the Tara River. In the next 40km (to Mt Prekornica) our route will coincide with the Top Trail 1 Route. Practically only at the exit from the town our descent from the pass on Velika Čkala, an 18km long and with an elevation loss of 980m, ends.

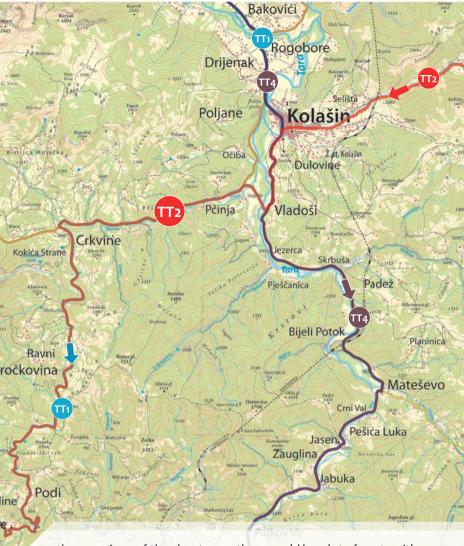
A kilometre and a half from the centre we will turn right onto the new bridge over the river and join the main road towards Podgorica. In the next 6km we will ride along it, of course with a necessary care since the traffic is heavy. At 8.1km from the centre of Kolašin and at an elevation of 1035masl we reach a place at which we will turn left, onto an asphalt road towards Crkvine.

After about 400m we reach a church by which the asphalt

road ends and a macadam road starts. In the wall around the churchyard there are two drinking fountains: one is consecrated, and the other, as a plaque informs, was made by the JNA (the YPA - the Yugoslav People 's Army) and decorated with – a five-pointed star. The drinking fountains live in harmony, and smile at passers-by from their wall.

We ascend through the forest, along a good road - the roughness of the macadam has been smoothed by a layer of earth, so the ride is pleasant, and only occasionally, on short sections, from underneath slightly more stones peek. At 1.4km from the main road there is a designated spring (on the left), and at 2.6km there is a place from which we may watch the horizon conquered and divided by two masses: on the left, there is an explosion of the Maganik Mountain and Moračke planine (the Morača Mountains), on the right, Sinjavina jealously keeps guard above the valley of Lipovo, and betwe-





en them, a piece of the sky stands in anxiety.

At 4.6km from the main road we go past another lovely vantage point towards Moračke planine (the Morača Mountains) on the west. At Jasenska kosa there is a pass (6.8km,1195masl) after which the road gradually becomes poorer. After a few kilometres of the up-and-down riding through the forest (with more descending), along the road on which after the heavier rains

there could be a lot of spots with mud, we go past another spring (9.7km, 1013masl – a pipe through which the water runs down into a hollowed log). Slightly further ahead there is a piece of the open area with a couple of houses, from where we can see a distant entrance to Platije, the deepest section of the Morača River Canyon (on the right), while on the left, sharp, leered peaks of the Žijovo Mountain peek (along the border with Albania, above Bukumirsko jezero (the



Bukumiri Lake) and Rikavačko jezero (the Rikavac Lake)). In the depth below us there is a narrow valley through which we will pass soon.

Now the road already descends steeply and it is of somewhat better quality, but it is still mostly a dirt road. At 11.5km from the main road, we will pass a very poor section, luckily only some hundred metres long, and at 13.4km we reach the Prekobrde Monastery (the Saint Michael the Archangel Monastery) (NB the nunnery).

Located on a high throne in the hills, as if transferred somewhere from Boka Kotorska, the monastery will surprise us with its monumental, coastal architecture. When we climb the stairs from the road towards the churchyard, it first shows us its grim frontage – a thin finger of its slender, tall bell tower, the stone of which, sharpened as a sickle, carves the clouds. Only when we come quite close to it and head around the church, the softness and roundness of the apse and the dome unleash.

The monastery was built between 1996 and 2008. The founder is Milan D.Vujisić from Podgorica, who wanted to build, in his remote homeland, something could encourage which gather highlanders, to keep them here and prevent this area from becoming completely deserted. At the beginning, there were twelve Russian nuns in the Prekobrđe Monastery, but the residency tax (!) has been so expensive that only three nuns have remained - one has been there for five years, and



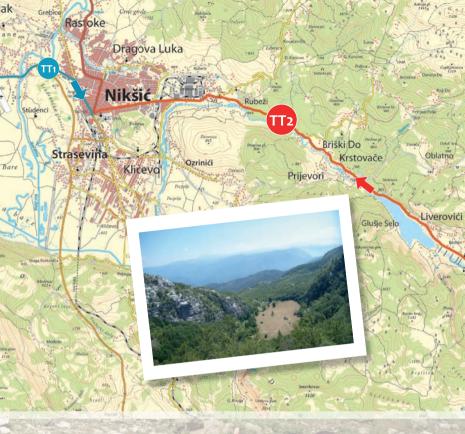
the other two already for an entire decade. (The tax for three of them is 2,000 euros a year...) Just beside the monastery there is also an old, now closed school. We continue down a steep macadam road which will become increasingly better as we descend into the valley of the Prekobrđe village. The surroundings is great and kilometres run fast, and one should look back occasionally and catch the last views of the church and its bell tower, since the exceptionality of their location is maybe even more emphasised from below.

The steepest section of the descent ends at the crossing over the Raštak brook (2.2km from the monastery, 465masl), but the downhill section doesn't end there – we will keep descending, riding low along the slopes

of the Vjetarnik Hill, above the Sjevernica Stream. It is especially lovely to pass this way in the late afternoon shade, through already dim colours of ferns, while on the other side of the little valley the slopes of Dedina ravan still glow under the sun. We reach an asphalt road (in so-

mewhat poorer condition, but still good for riding) at 5.3km from the monastery (18.7km from the main road). About 300m before that place we will come across a rare sight for our region: a simple cable car put together of car parts, for transferring objects (and who knows, maybe even some rather brave locals) to the other side of the Sjevernica Stream.

In the hamlet of Jabuka (6.9km from the monastery), the stream forms a lovely whirlpool,

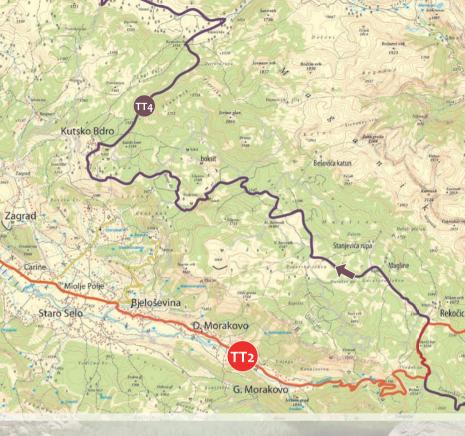


and from there the asphalt road will be excellent as well. The valley through which we pass is both enchanting and romantic at the same time. We ride up and down along the very river and through the wooded dales, and in each of them several houses are situated; there are wonderful yards and heaps of other things at which the eye will lie with pleasure.

Near Sreteški krš we go past a little wooden bridge without handrails, and there our long descent finally ends (9.1km from the monastery, 22.4km from the main road, 210masl/ - the lowest point on the TT2 Route). And after we pass below the Sreteški krš we will meet the Kolašin - Podgorica main road again (230masl, 24km after we have

previously abandoned the main road).

We reach the main road near the village of Međuriječje and at the very beginning of the bridge over the Morača River. We will turn left and cross over it, and after 750m, having passed through a short tunnel, before the next bridge, turn right, onto a narrow asphalt road. That road first descends under the bridge, and then it starts ascending steeply (from 237masl). The ascent is strenuous (9-12%) and it leads through the low vegetation, along a narrow ravine. This is just the beginning of a hard work which is ahead of us: in the next 16km we will ascend up Vlahovići onto Mt Prekornica, up to an elevation of 1500m (1260m of



elevation gain in comparison to the main road).

At 1.4km from the main road we go past a lonely shop-pub (or is it actually a pub -shop?) called Radošev lug. Another "that " place which must not be skipped if we want our journey to have a soul. One should, therefore, stop and walk into a concrete little house in which, on the counter and on the walls completely covered by shelves, there are all possible and impossible goods which could (but do not have to) be needed by people from the neighbourhood. From matches, over the plastic Chinese toys, agricultural tools, pots and kettles, flour, padlocks, onions and pickles,

to beer, Coke and cognac. And once we choose what we will drink and eat, we should move to the second phase of the ritual: getting out and sitting down at the bench in front of one of the massive, simply hewn wooden tables in the "pub" section. Here we will straight away meet a couple of locals who with a loza (grape brandy, grappa) or a beer (in the concrete trough close at hand, ice cold spring water baptises and prepares the next bottles for usage) discuss daily politics and local news. We will likely be offered with a "kafiloza": a cup of Turkish coffee, a small glass of loza, and a chitchat. And very soon we will know everything about

their life and the life in this region (which can be very interesting), about transportation of logs along the mountainous roads, as well as the condition of the very roads (which can be very useful, especially in spring when snow melts). The contents of loza in kafiloza every two-wheel traveller will have to determine for himself/herself – one should only try hard to be in condition to sit on the bike after such a meaningful conversation.

We will soon leave the forest and find ourselves on a very attractive section, crazily pasted on the nearly vertical slope of the hill along which our path crawls boldly and obstinately in a Himalayan manner. From its serpentines we will have a nice view over the Morača River Canyon and the peaks of the Sinjajevina mountain range, behind which the valley of the village of Lipovo is hidden, and on the horizon, straight ahead of us, if we know where to look, we will also spot a part of the road along which we have descended from Jasenska kosa to the Prekobrđe Monastery.

We enter the forest again. At 3.2km from the main road (490masl) there is a place from which the serpentines which we have left behind are best seen – attractive and great for taking pictures, as well as for the morale. On this section the asphalt road is excellent, but the ascent is still steep. At 3.7km there is a spring (on the right, water runs from a pipe), and at 6.2km (775masl) we come across a junction at which we turn right and downhill in the direction of

Maganik, branching off the TT1 Route (it goes left and uphill, towards Danilovgrad).

A good asphalt road leads us uphill (8-9%), through a low vegetation. This section is also glued along a steep slope of the hill, with a terrific view over Platije in certain sections.

At the beginning of the 9th kilometre the asphalt road ends and we continue along a solid macadam road (although a slightly less rolled). A very arduous ascent ends below Mt Maganik, after the serpentines on Velika glava (the Great Head) and Planinica (A Little Mountain)(17.5km from the main road, 1550masl – an elevation gain which we have tackled is a little more than 1300m).

We will continue riding up-anddown through a harsh landscape and tickling the rocks of Maganik. One has an impression that not even the voice can escape in this place – it will run aground onto an incredible wall that towers above us on the right side, cutting off most of the sky. For a moment we will think that we understand that what we see, but judgement will retreat over and over again before the assault of rough rocks, before explosions of the screes, before peaks rising above the two thousand metres of altitude. The light from all that falls at us wounded, chopped and deceptive, describing and revealing nothing, therefore defeated and disappointed eye flees amongst the grasses, covers oneself by blinking of the evelid. The sublime chaos above us shows us just how imperfect we are, Maganik bespeaks us by it that we cannot fully comprehend it.

Bumping along the brim of a strange trough of Maganičko polje (the Maganik Field) we somehow dodge the spells of this vilayet. We pass over the highest point at this stage of our journey (1615masl, 21.5km from the main road) and start a very long descent, which will last practically until the end of the travel in Nikšić - about 36km, with an elevation loss of nearly 1000m).

Down the serpentines in the forest and along the "uncombed" macadam road we reach a shabby Nikšić picnic and vacation area, King Nikola's protected area called Zabran (30.5km from the main road, 1150masl). Below Zabran the road is very poor (cracked by water) and occasionally very steep, so in certain places we will ride with difficulties.

A kilometre and a half from Zabran and after another series of serpentines, an asphalt road which will take us down a deep, narrow and beautiful Gračanica Valley starts. Through a piece of magical forest we descent into a long village of Morakovo. The downhill section becomes gentler, but the kilometres

along the good asphalt road flit under the wheels – nevertheless, particularly in the upper section of the valley, it's worth stopping and looking around occasionally: a deep, idyllic ravine below the high peaks, which we leave behind, is an impressive sight.

From the 45th kilometre we go past the Liverovići Lake, the dam of which we reach at the beginning of the 47th kilometre. Increasingly densely populated areas and increasingly wider asphalt road tell us that we already approach the town, which we finally reach after 390km, closing a large circuit on the TT2 Route.

Well, there we are back in civilisation: it hasn't been long since we have set off on this adventure from the roundabout, but we have already managed to forget that everyday world still exists. And now we stand amazed by that fact, dusty and ruffled by the wind of the downhill slope, strange to townspeople, and wondering at them. Nevertheless, everything will soon come to its place, after a good meal and sleep. Only the memories will continue to buzz in our head and heart, since we cannot fool and lure them by hedonism. And would we really wish that?

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 centar: 1300 (24h)
information@montenegro.travel
booking@montenegro.travel
complaints@montenegro.travel



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NIKŠIĆ

www.niksic.travel

Ivana Milutinovića 10, 81400 Nikšić

Tel: +382(40)213262 Fax: +382(40)212511 e-mail: info@niksic.travel



www.pluzine.travel

Baja Pivljanina bb. 81435 Plužine

Tel: +382 (0) 40 270 068

+382 (0) 40 270 069

+382 (0) 69 635 412

+382 (0) 69 670 939 e-mail: topluzine@t-com.me

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BIJELO POLJE

www.tobijelopolje.me

Nedjeljka Merdovića bb, 84000 B. Polje

Tel: +382 (0) 50 484 795 e-mail: tobp@t-com.me

KOLAŠIN

www.tokolasin.me

Mirka Vešovića bb, 81210 Kolašin

Tel: +382 (0)20 864 254 Fax: +382 (0)20 864 254 e-mail: info@kolasin.travel



















