



Strategy For Development Of Tourism Destination Karavanke/Karawanken

April 2020

Client: BSC, poslovno podporni center d.o.o., Kranj
C. Staneta Žagarja 37, 4000 Kranj, Slovenia



Subject: Strategy For Development Of Tourism Destination
Karavanke/Karawanken

Contract: Pogodba za pripravo strategije turističnega razvoja in akcijski načrt
območja Karavank v sklopu projekta Alpe Adria Karavanke/Karawanken

Consultant: Zavod tovarna trajnostnega turizma, GoodPlace: Jana Apih, Jan Klavora,
Teja Korošec,
Nea Culpa marketing agency: Neja Petek, Petra Goneli, K&Z, Svetovanje
za razvoj d.o.o.: Slavka Zupan,
Mag. Claudia L. Pertl

**Document
version:** April 2020

Strategy is a result of the Alpe Adria Karavanke/Karawanken project, which is implemented within the Cooperation Programme Interreg V-A Slovenia-Austria and is co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The main purpose of the project is the development of tourist offers in the Karavanke area. The leading partner of the project is the Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska, BSC Kranj.

INDEX

INDEX.....	3
1 ANALYSIS.....	4
1.1 METHODOLOGY.....	4
1.2 DESKTOP ANALYSIS.....	5
1.3 INTERVIEWS	7
1.4 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	8
2 STRATEGIC ORIENTATION.....	18
2.1 SWOT FOR KARAVANKE DESTINATION	18
2.2 MISSION, VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS.....	19
3 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY	20
3.1. A. Management.....	21
3.2 B. Product development	35
3.3 C. Promotion	73
4 CONCLUSION	96

1 ANALYSIS

1.1 METHODOLOGY

The following sequence of tasks was agreed upon for this paper:

- coordinating the design of consultancy services with the customer (expectations, past planning and development measures, concrete objectives and tasks),
- reviewing existing project ideas and feasibility studies,
- compiling an overview of existing target groups, markets, developments and trends (demand, market potential, market attractiveness),
- analysis of existing project documents,
- extended feasibility studies,

In addition,

- there is an emphasis on cooperating with external service providers & project,
- during the design of the interview settings and the determination of strategic interview objectives: content, questionnaires, methods and consolidation of results.

Existing data & studies that have already been completed during the course of the project will be used as a basis. These documents will be provided by the customers.

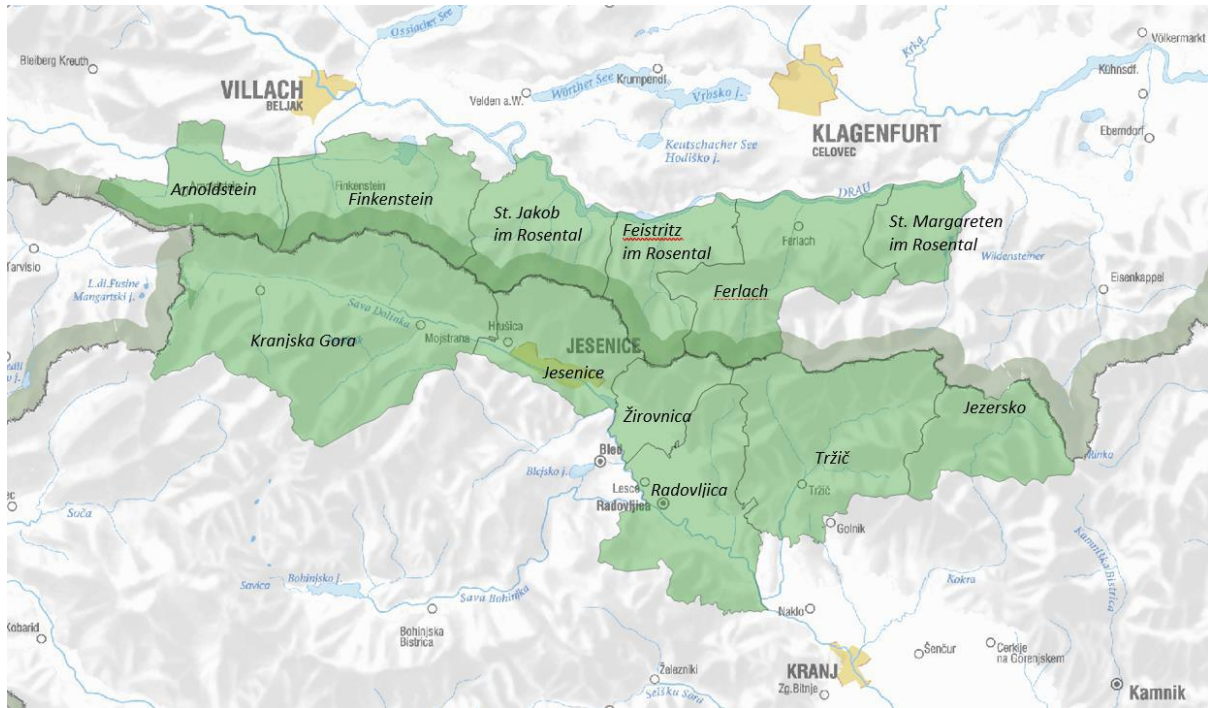
Interviews

To receive as comprehensive a picture of tourism in the region as possible, 20 interviews with representatives of a range of highly diverse tourism sectors were conducted in Austria and Slovenia (destination management, daytrips & excursions, accommodation providers). A qualitative approach using guideline-based interviews was chosen for data gathering. This approach was selected to ensure that the tourism region under investigation would be assessed "from the inside", i.e. from the perspective of the persons acting within the system, thus providing an implementation-orientated, practical viewpoint.

As a next step, the data collected during the interviews was incorporated into the existing data, and studies that were previously completed as part of the project were integrated into the final strategy paper and completed with relevant statistical key indicators.

1.2 DESKTOP ANALYSIS

ABOUT KARAVANKE – short summary of the analysis of tourism infrastructure and product development with key findings



The 120 km long Karavanke mountains present one of the longest mountain ridges in Europe. They are situated between the urban and tourist centres of Gorenjska and Koroška regions in Slovenia on the south side, and the Austrian Carinthia on the north side. This document focuses on the Western Karavanke area, which is also the area of the Alpe Adria Karavanke / Karawanken project.

The tourist offer of the Western Karavanke is mostly tied to well-preserved natural and cultural heritage. Its diverse alpine landscape is characterized by steep slopes, scenic mountain peaks, lush forests, valleys, gorges, rich flora and fauna, lake and waterfalls. A significant proportion of the territory is protected under NATURA 2000 or other nature protection networks.

The western Karavanke mountains offer splendid views of both the Drava basin and Sava Valley, the Julian Alps, the Kamnik-Savinja Alps, and the more remote mountain ranges such as Ziljan Alps. Beautiful vistas can also be admired from the valleys, where green meadows are contrasted by steep rocky slopes. When developing the tourist offer in the Western Karavanke, viewpoints should therefore be emphasized and integrated in route planning, sightseeing and site promotion.

The cultural and historical heritage of the Western Karavanke is represented not only by religious objects, castles, museums, archaeological sites, and town centres, but also by rich intangible heritage such as customs and traditions, traditional crafts and events, and oral traditions, which also present an important part of the region's tourism offer.

Tourist accommodation in the Western Karavanke urban and tourist areas mostly consists of hotels, guesthouses, private rooms and apartments, while mountain areas mainly offer accommodation in huts and lodges. Only a few of accommodation facilities are specialized for hikers or cyclists.

The destination of Western Karavanke does not have a regional tourism organization to carry out the development, promotion and marketing functions. There are two regional tourism organizations operating on the Austrian side – in the Villach region and in the Carnica region in Rosental. They are responsible for the development and promotion of the wider area of Southern Carinthia. At individual micro destinations, there are a total of seven tourist offices available to inform visitors about the offer. Most of them are located in municipal centres.

On the Slovenian side, regional level of organization is only present in the Julian Alps, while the Regional Development Agency of Gorenjska region is working on projects of general development in the Karavanke area. Destinations with more developed tourist sectors (Kranjska Gora, Radovljica, Žirovnica) have local tourism organizations, which manage tourist information offices. Above all, these organizations perform promotional and marketing activities, while their development function is weaker. In destinations without local tourism organizations (Jesenice, Jezersko, Tržič), local tourist information centres carry out informational and promotional activities.

In total, there are currently 19 tourist information centres in the Western Karavanke. During low season, many of them operate on limited hours, or are even temporarily closed. Moreover, since some tourist centres are not marked well, visitors often have trouble locating them.

In the Western Karavanke, there are approximately 340 km of marked hiking trails with access to mountain huts and shelters. The web of trails includes easy, demanding and very demanding hiking trails. Hiking in the Western Karavanke is therefore appropriate for a wide range of visitors, from highly trained athletes to families with small children. Visitors can hike alone or hire a guide. In Slovenia, hiking trails are marked and maintained by different local hiking clubs. Trails are marked with red signposts and markings of white dot surrounded with a red circle. Hiking trails in Austria are marked with yellow signposts. Financing the maintenance of hiking infrastructure presents a big challenge on both sides of the border.

In addition to individual hiking trails, there are various well-marked long-distance hiking routes that connect different trails. Long-distance hiking routes that run across the Western Karavanke are: Panoramic trail Karavanke – Svinška planina / Panoramaweg Südalpen, Via Alpina Purple Trail, Slovenian Mountain Hiking Trail, and Alpe Adria Trail.

The Western Karavanke offer many possibilities for cycling on hiking trails or along natural paths, but there are only a few kilometres of dedicated cycling routes in the area, and Kranjska Gora is the only destination with a bike park. However, with the growing number of cyclists in the mountains, the need for marked and well-maintained cycling trails is also increasing. While cyclists are currently mostly using GPS tracks, descriptions and maps for orientation, more and more cycling trails are being marked with special signposts. In Slovenia, such signposts are of blue colour. In general, the Slovenian side of the mountain ridge is more suitable for mountain biking, since the Austrian side is very steep in many parts. The key long-distance cross-border cycling routes in the Western Karavanke are Karavanke Cycling Circle and Trans Karavanke route. One of the most popular daily mountain biking routes runs to the Triple Border (Tromeja / Dreiländereck), while the daily routes from Kranjska Gora to Villach over Korensko sedlo, from Tržič to Ferlach over Ljubelj, and from Preddvor to Eisenkappel via Jezersko mainly attract road cyclists.

For the time being, there is no comprehensive and strategic product development and marketing structure in the Western Karavanke. Hiking and cycling programs are mostly designed on ad hoc basis

by specialized tour operators and local tourism organizations, and are being promoted online individually.

In addition to specialized accommodation, there is also a lack of organized hiking and cycling tours with arranged luggage transfer. Cooperation between local service providers and destination managers is weak. Furthermore, it is necessary to set a clear legal framework for mountain biking on existing hiking trails.

Given the competitiveness of ski resorts in the Western Karavanke, many destinations shifted their focus to other winter activities in nature (cross-country skiing, sledding, ski touring, ice skating, snowshoeing and ice climbing). There are five well-developed centres for winter activities in the area, namely Kranjska Gora, Jezersko, Zelenica, Bodental and St. Jakob. The infrastructure is most developed in Kranjska Gora and Bodental. The entire area offers 127 km of cross-country skiing trails and 50 km of sledding trails.

Organized events in the Western Karavanke mainly relate to outdoor activities and sport competitions. Only a couple of events in the area attract foreign visitors. A large majority of event visitors are either domestic, coincidental or participate in the events. Cross-border events are rare.

1.3 INTERVIEWS

Collection of possible content (key aspects, stakeholder interests, development ideas for regional tourism services etc.) with a focus on the long-term development of tourism products such as hiking and cycling as well as "gentle" winter tourism; on the basis of questionnaire-based (to ensure comparability in terms of content), qualitative interviews in the regions of the Carnica Region Rosental, Villach and Slovenia

In order to obtain the insight of key stakeholders in the region, a number of interviews were carried out. The stakeholders that were interviewed are:

SLOVENIA:

- Blaž Veber / Tourism Kranjska Gora,
- Vera Djurić Drozdek, Aleksandra Orel / Municipality of Jesenice,
- Andrej Karničar / mayor of the Municipality of Jezersko,
- Boštjan Strnad / BaseCamp,
- Dušan Štrucl – Dixi, GLZ Slovenia Outdoor, Bike Nomad,
- Peter in Marko Lenarčič. GLZ Slovenia Outdoor,
- Jože Rovar, Alpine Association of Slovenia,
- Nataša Mikelj in Sašo Gašperin, Visit Radolca,
- Mateja Dolžan, Municipality of Tržič,
- Janez Dolžan, Zavod za turizem in kulturo Žirovnica.

AUSTRIA:

- Samo Kupper, Camping Rosental & EXPI hands on Science Center, Carnica Region Rosental,
- Carolin Walker, Galerie Walker, Carnica Region Rosental,
- Michaela Tiefenbacher, TVB Finkenstein & Naturel Hoteldörfer Schönleitn & Seeleitn, Villach – Faaker See – Ossiacher See,
- Tina Loigge, Wörthersee Tourismus GmbH., Wörthersee,
- Daniel Mesotitsch, Sportunion Rosental (performance centre), Carnica Region Rosental,

- Karin Hermann, WAHAHA Paradise, Carnica Region Rosental,
- Georg Overs, Region Villach Tourismus GmbH., Villach – Faaker See Ossiacher See,
- Mark Horbal, Region Villach Tourismus GmbH., Villach – Faaker See Ossiacher See,
- Andreas Holzer, Region Villach Tourismus GmbH., Villach – Faaker See Ossiacher See,
- Herbert Stefan, Langhotel Rosentalerhof, Carnica Region Rosental,
- Michael Sternig, Stadtmarketing Villach, City of Villach,
- Roland Ertl, Klagenfurter Hütte, Carnica Region Rosental

1.4 FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

SLOVENIA

CONCLUSIONS OF INTERVIEWS

The **biggest comparative advantages** of the Karavanke are the pristine protected nature, rich biodiversity, amazing views and the fact, that there is no mass tourism and related negative impacts. Local stakeholders prioritize the development of boutique tourist products based on experiencing nature. They wish to avoid overcrowding at tourist spots. Interviewees think it is best to develop tourism offer without major interventions in natural environment or cultural heritage. For this reason, they believe all new outdoor products should be placed on already existing trails.

Local stakeholders believe that the Karavanke can only become a successful tourist destination if the Slovenian and Austrian sides work closely together. Cycling and hiking trails on both sides of the border should be integrated in joint products. Moreover, micro destinations on both sides of the border should collaborate in the area of developing public transport, which is aimed at tourists.

According to the opinion of interviewees, hiking products are best developed tourist products in the Karavanke, but are closely followed by cycling products. Both segments help to prolong tourist season. Winter activities are perceived as having less potential. While stakeholders evaluate the state of existing infrastructure as good, they are less happy with the general quality of tourist services. Geopark Karavanke is recognized as one of local experience providers with best developed programs for visitors. Interviewees emphasize the need to have a permanent source of financing for the maintenance of trails.

There are many opportunities for quality mountain and road cycling. Trans Karavanke cycling route is seen as a product with lots of potential, but it needs much more promotion to become successful. In comparison with the Julian Alps, hiking trails in the Karavanke are in general less demanding, especially on the Slovenian side. This is why the area is also very suitable for cyclists. Interviewees see the biggest obstacles for development of new outdoor tourist products in land ownership disputes and opposition from local hunters.

Some stakeholders see the Karavanke as the link between two major tourist areas (Bled – Kranjska Gora and Lake Wörth – Villach). Even though the mountain ridge is divided between two countries, both sides of the ridge are characterized by similar cultural features and heritage, and can therefore be marketed under one story. As elements connecting both lands, interviewees highlight lakes and the Carniolan bee. They also recognize plenty of opportunities for the development of culinary experiences.

During the interviews, the contrast between the Southern and the Northern slopes of the Karavanke was mentioned several times. While the Southern slopes are greener and less steep, the slopes on the Austrian side are mostly rocky and steep. Different slope types thus offer opportunities for the development of different activities.

FINDINGS FROM DESK TOP RESEARCH

- According to the unified characteristics of the destinations in the Karavanke and the main direction of regional tourist development, it would be beneficial to determine the identity of the Karavanke as a tourist destination. Its identity should differ from the ones of more recognized tourist destinations nearby.
- Tourist offer of different micro destinations within the Karavanke area is not well connected. There is no regional tourism organization to perform the functions of strategic planning, product development, management, and marketing for the entire area.
- The working hours of existing tourist-information centres should be adjusted to better fit the visitor demand. Where this is not feasible, modern information boards are needed.
- Given the natural features of each micro destination, it makes sense to direct infrastructure development within individual micro destinations to activities with most potential. For this purpose, municipalities in the Karavanke have been divided into three product groups.
- Hiking: Žirovnica, Radovljica, Ferlach, St. Margareten, Feistritz, Finkenstein
- Cycling: Tržič, Jesenice, Kranjska Gora, Arnoldstein
- Winter activities: Jezersko, St. Jakob
- A review of hiking and cycling tourist offer shows the need for more accommodation specialized for hikers and cyclists. While hiking trails are relatively well marked, cycling trails have much space for improvements. There is a lack of modern interactive information boards located at starting points and crossroads of hiking and cycling routes.
- Tourist offer of the entire Karavanke area should be presented on a joint platform or rather on the destination's own website. Furthermore, a joint reservation system that offers a complete overview of trails and other tourist offer in the area should be implemented.
- In recent years, a growing interest in sustainable winter activities has been recorded. Products involving light winter activities in the Karavanke are still in the development phase. Micro destinations and service providers are recommended to develop their winter activities according to their chosen target groups and cooperate with other micro destinations and businesses. They should keep in mind that developing winter activities in times of climate change will require innovative solutions.
- Regarding events, destinations should focus on organization of typical events that take place every year at approximately the same time and as such become traditional. Events should be based on local character and environmental protection.
- Two thirds of all arrivals and overnights are created in Kranjska Gora and almost all Kranjska Gora together with Radovljica.
- All partner municipalities in Slovenia with the exception of Jesenice saw continued growth in arrivals and overnights in last two years. The highest growth of arrivals and overnights was reported in Tržič and Žirovnica.
- All partner municipalities in Slovenia with the exception of Kranjska Gora have high seasonality during summer months.
- In 2017, Kranjska Gora was the only destination with a higher occupancy rate than the national average. With a value of 6,5 %, Jezersko recorded the lowest occupancy rate among all analysed municipalities.
- Slovenian guests represent maximum thirty percent of all guests. Most of the foreign guests are coming from Italy, Germany, United Kingdom and Netherlands.

From facts above it can be concluded that especially because of high seasonality in all destinations with exception of Kranjska Gora where also spring and autumn months represents the lower season

investments into tourism products that extend main summer season into early spring and late autumn. Also, occupancy rate shows the same result since all destinations with exception of Kranjska Gora has lower compared to national average. The answer to those challenges can be cycling and hiking in Karavanke Mountain Range since these destinations allows those 2 activities almost all year around because of climate and terrain. Karavanke Mountain Range can also represent one of the solutions for over tourism during the summer in some destinations around Karavanke Mountain Range like Bled, Faaker Sea etc. Those destinations can with a help of hiking and cycling product redirect tourism flows into Karavanke which are not saturated with tourists.

AUSTRIA

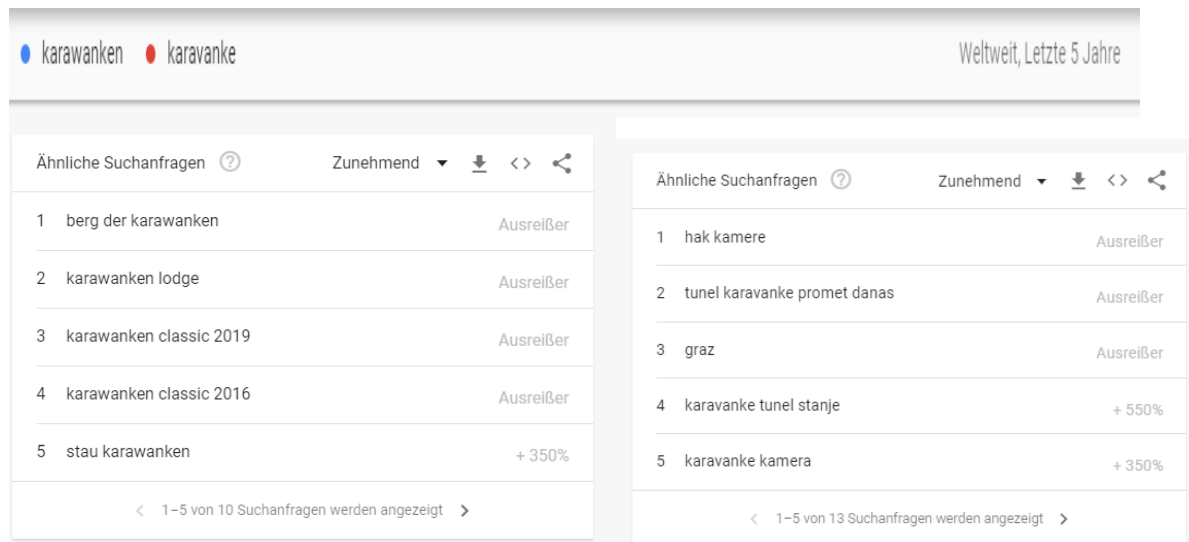
Overall, the experiential space of the Karavnke is described as an extraordinary natural gem that is worth protecting. The preservation of nature is a major concern for all the interviewees and one that should definitely be considered for the structuring of future offers and services. The goal is cross-border tourism that does not impact on natural resources and landscapes, but rather "highlights" them in a natural way. Touristic offers and services should be developed within the existing framework, without major interventions. The further development of products in existing spaces and/or along existing routes has absolute priority. Ideal routes are routes that are integrated in existing landscapes and realities. Mass tourism is to be avoided.

The entire region is exciting and harbours a lot of potential for tourism. However, it is not perceived as the experiential space Alpe Adria Karavanke / Karawanken. The Karavanke range is not developed enough to be associated with a tourism destination as such, neither in terms of advertising nor infrastructurally. When people talk about the Karawanken, they usually refer to the impressive mountain range with the well-known Triglav or Mangart peaks, which does harbour potential with regard to publicity and image. However, commercial offers tend to communicate individual tours and summits, such as the Ferlacher Spitz, the Hochstuhl via ferrata, Klagenfurter Hütte and many more, i.e. specific points of interest that are known rather than the project area as such.

As a tourism region, the experiential space Karavanke is one of many well-known regions. For guests, it offers no concrete reasons for bookings, as it lacks identity, offers and services. The Karawanken tunnel is one association that comes to mind; however, it has a rather negative connotation. To be successful/become visible, measures that reinforce identity (internal & external marketing, designation of the experiential space, exchange of information & training etc.) are essential.

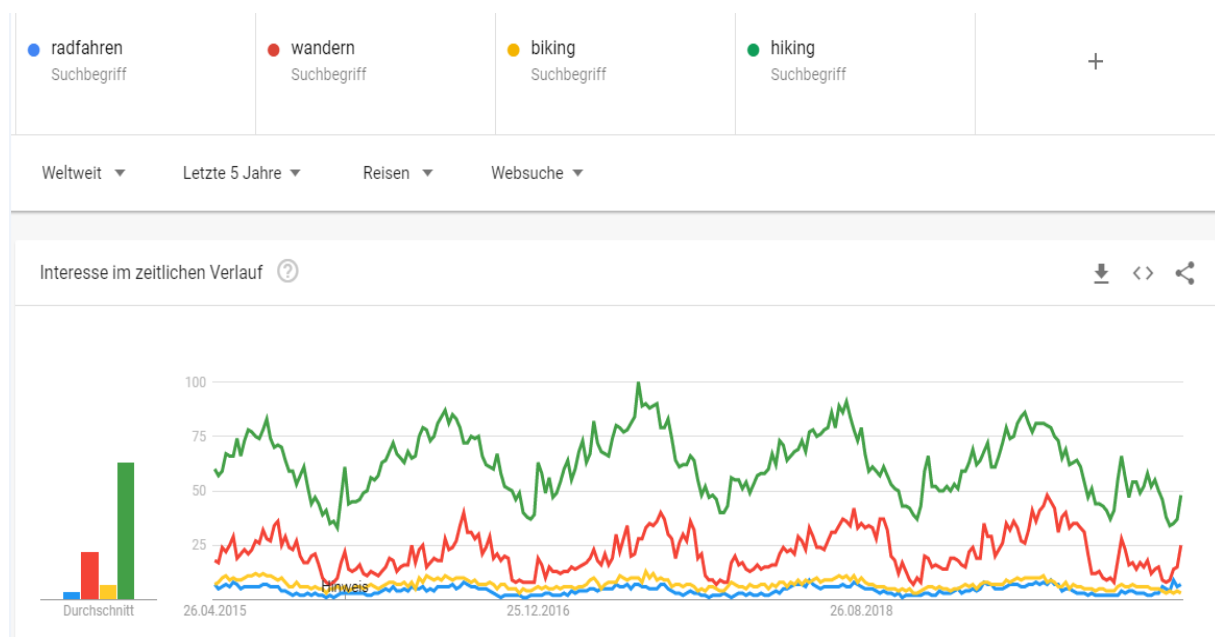
Karavanke = mountains/hiking & tunnel. An online analysis confirms this perception, at least when using the German search term, and shows that the region has made a certain amount of progress in establishing itself as a hiking destination.

The web search below shows the most frequent searches in category of Karawanken.



(Google web search, worldwide, category travel, last 5 years)

Hiking and cycling are seen as harbouring the greatest potential, with hiking playing a bigger role in regional offers for guests. This is also due to the unweaning popularity of hiking as an activity over recent years:



(Google web search, worldwide, category travel, last 5 years)

By regions/countries, the search structure still shows that hiking is a leading product:



(Google web search, worldwide, category travel, last 5 years)

The quality of service in both respects may be considered insufficient. Overall, there are few accommodation providers who specialise in hikers or cyclists; the density of mountain huts is low and there is a distinct lack of services and transfers. Another challenge lies in the subject of liability and the arrangements reached with landowners regarding legal routes and trails.

The Southern Alps Panorama Trail was mentioned as a predominantly positive example. The trail may also be used as a connecting link to the Alpe Adria Trail. The three-country concept is at least reflected in the choice for bikers, in the form of the Bike Park in Kranjska Gora. With regard to hiking, however, there is no such connection at this point. The construction/expansion of the cross-border trail across the Jepca Saddle is seen as harbouring potential. The trail is also popular with mountain bikers. A cross-border hiking product with an exceedingly high potential would be the circular tour around Koschuta massif, which runs through the entire project area and also includes several mountain huts, which are indispensable for functioning hiking products.

The existing bicycle infrastructure within the region is considered "beautiful", but with room for improvement regarding quality & service (trail centres, for instance). An example is the Karavanke Bike Circle, which is highly focused on mountain bikes on the Slovenian side, and not designed in a particularly selective way on the Austrian side. It is therefore not a connective overall product and will have to be developed further before it is marketed.

Focusing on existing resources is regarded as an opportunity: gentle hills, picturesque lakes, leisurely/athletic cycling routes, 3 countries. The classic cycling tourist in the region is a leisurely cyclist aged +50. Mountain biking and cycling are absolute trends – mountain biking also for a younger target group – but both need a certain range of services and orientation aids in order to function.

The web search below shows the most frequent searches in category of mountain biking regarding the type of mountain biking (e-biking, endure...) and services.

Mountainbiking		Weltweit, Letzte 5 Jahre	
Verwandte Themen ?	Zunehmend ▾	Ähnliche Suchanfragen ?	Zunehmend ▾
1 Elektrofahrrad - Thema	+ 190%	1 solid mtb	Ausreißer
2 Endurosport - Sport	+ 140%	2 mountain bike rentals near me	+ 4.650%
3 Romet - Unternehmen	+ 130%	3 mountain bike rental near me	+ 4.600%
4 Canyon Bicycles - Thema	+ 120%	4 mountain bike trail near me	+ 2.500%
5 Rucksack - Thema	+ 110%	5 mountain biking near me	+ 2.200%
< 1-5 von 15 Themen werden angezeigt >		< 1-5 von 25 Suchanfragen werden angezeigt >	

(Google web search, worldwide, all categories, last 5 years)

The cycling route Trans Karavanke as a cross-border product was not mentioned by any of the interviewees, which is an indication that awareness of this particular product is low even in the immediate vicinity. The shuttle train between Jesenice and Villach is seen as a good idea. The route across the Jepca saddle is a good mountain bike tour for more ambitious bikers. Extending it is seen as harbouring potential. The three-country route is perceived as a popular cross-border product. The three-country tour from Rateče to Bled is perceived as attractive, and guided bike tours along the route are already being offered by local service providers.

The term Alpe Adria, which stands for a southern lifestyle and the action radius & living environment of Slovenia, Italy and Austria, is used frequently in the connection of cycling (as opposed to hiking).

Alpe Adria = cycling. The online analysis (category travel) confirms this perception. Looking at similar searches, cycling tourism is the common denominator. Despite the Alpe Adria Trail, hiking doesn't really come up as a subject. It is also noticeable that e-bikes are a relevant search topic on the Internet. This should be considered for future routes and products.

The web search below shows the most frequent searches in category of cycling according to destinations and amenities.

alpe adria		Weltweit, Letzte 5 Jahre, Reisen	
Verwandte Themen ?	Zunehmend ▾	Ähnliche Suchanfragen ?	Zunehmend ▾
1 Lignano Sabbiadoro - Ort in Italien	Ausreißer	1 alpe adria radweg route	Ausreißer
2 Villach - Stadt in Österreich	Ausreißer	2 alpen adria radweg	Ausreißer
3 Etappenrennen - Thema	Ausreißer	3 alpe adria radweg unterkünfte	Ausreißer
4 Elektrofahrrad - Thema	Ausreißer	4 fc alpe adria	Ausreißer
5 Slowenien - Land, Balkanhalbinsel	Ausreißer	5 alpe adria radweg e bike	Ausreißer
< 1-5 von 25 Themen werden angezeigt >		< 1-5 von 9 Suchanfragen werden angezeigt >	

(Google web search, worldwide, category travel, last 5 years)

One reason for this is the Ciclovía Alpe Adria cycling route, which starts in Salzburg and leads across the provinces of Salzburg and Carinthia over a distance of 425km. The border to Italy is crossed at Arnoldstein, and from there the route continues all the way to Grado at the Adriatic Sea. It might be strategically interesting to link the route to the Karavanke region, using Arnoldstein as a hub.

This development is an advantage in terms of positioning, as the name Alpe Adria Karavanke / Karawanken encompasses both key areas of tourism – hiking and cycling – in the minds of the players involved as well as in those of visitors. This is something that could be reinforced in terms of marketing techniques (at least online).

Stronger cross-regional and cross-border cooperation could strive for a more varied, year-round, high-quality and sustainable offer of products and services, with a need to re-define and edit the concept of gentle winter tourism. Mild winters thwart a lot of plans, also in the Karavanke region. Biking and hiking are one method of counteracting mild winters, with the ultimate aim of extending the length of tourism seasons and the duration of visitors' stays. Climate change means that hiking and biking are practically possible year-round.

When it comes to gentle winter tourism, cross-country skiing and winter hiking (with little or no snow) remain the key areas. In this context, the focus should be on long, snow-free seasons (spring to early winter), for reasons to do with sustainability, but also due to a lack of tourism providers and/or equipment. Introducing a winter product to a region that has hitherto seen little or no winter tourism is considered difficult to impossible. Kranjska Gora is generally considered the winter specialist within the region. The training centre in St. Jakob also has a good, albeit small offer, and hosts international competitions. However, due to a lack of snowfall, the centre has to rely on snow-making facilities. A total of 3.3km of cross-country trails of varying levels of difficulty are available, which may be used in different constellations. Tobogganing runs are provided on the Slovenian side.

Year-round tourism is the goal not just because of value creation and statistical data – without good booking numbers over a period of several months, it is difficult to hire qualified staff.

In Carinthia, it is mostly the 3-star hotels and holiday apartments that have registered a decrease in arrivals and overnight stays, i.e. precisely those categories of accommodation providers that are predominant in the Carnica Region Rosental. It is possible that this trend will be reversed following the current developments around COVID-19, with smaller, more secluded units gaining importance as holiday accommodation – always provided they offer quality and certain standards. These types of accommodation also dominate in the Slovenian project area. A big opportunity for the rural area is the idea of a slow-paced holiday such as farmstay holidays or holidays in smaller settings.

To DOs: Create basic standards, support & train accommodation providers, especially with regard to mobility.

The camping category is an important generator of visitor numbers, during the summer months and beyond. This trend has been going on for some time. In the region Villach – Faaker See – Ossiacher See alone, camping accounts for a total of 26.6% of the regional total number of overnight stays. Noticeable: Campers from Austria and abroad spend four days on average at a campground. In Carinthia, however, guests remain significantly longer (six days on average). In 2019, Austrian guests even spent nine days on average at a campground. Possible synergies with the Karavanke region could and should be evaluated.

The table below shows a structure of most commonly booked accommodation in Austrian side of Karavanke.

Ankünfte und Übernachtungen nach Unterkunftsarten im Kalenderjahr 2019 endgültige Ergebnisse									
Kärnten									
UNTERKUNFTSARTEN	ANKÜNFTE			ÜBERNÄCHTUNGEN			AUFENTHALTSDAUER		
	Insgesamt	Inländische Gäste	Ausländische Gäste	Insgesamt	Inländische Gäste	Ausländische Gäste	Insgesamt	Inländische Gäste	Ausländische Gäste
	absolut						in Nächten		
Hotels und ähnliche Betriebe	2.068.147	1.013.969	1.054.178	6.776.776	2.960.677	3.816.099	3,3	2,9	3,6
davon: 5-/4-Stern Betriebe	1.088.753	570.615	518.138	3.799.283	1.755.848	2.043.435	3,5	3,1	3,9
3-Stern Betriebe	791.450	352.378	439.072	2.398.349	944.706	1.453.643	3,0	2,7	3,3
2-/1-Stern Betriebe	187.944	90.976	96.968	579.144	260.123	319.021	3,1	2,9	3,3
Ferienwohnungen/-häuser (gewerblich)	249.257	85.470	163.787	1.404.789	400.668	1.004.121	5,6	4,7	6,1
Gewerbliche Beherbergungsbetriebe	2.317.404	1.099.439	1.217.965	8.181.565	3.361.345	4.820.220	3,5	3,1	4,0
Campingplätze	410.498	90.034	320.464	2.374.260	759.568	1.614.692	5,8	8,4	5,0
Unterkünfte f. Kinder und Jugendliche	74.753	38.654	36.099	229.089	122.743	106.346	3,1	3,2	2,9
Kurheime	26.944	25.041	1.903	434.025	417.484	16.541	16,1	16,7	8,7
Bewirtschaftete Schutzhütten	29.014	11.516	17.498	37.480	15.716	21.764	1,3	1,4	1,2
Sonstige Unterkünfte	71.103	41.006	30.097	312.000	177.344	134.656	4,4	4,3	4,5
Sonstige gewerbli. Beherbergungsbetriebe	612.312	206.251	406.061	3.386.854	1.492.855	1.893.999	5,5	7,2	4,7
Privatquartiere insgesamt	314.508	89.165	225.343	1.791.130	421.628	1.369.502	5,7	4,7	6,1
Insgesamt	3.244.224	1.394.855	1.849.369	13.359.549	5.275.828	8.083.721	4,1	3,8	4,4

One big opportunity lies in the expansion of the idea of local recreation, with the region functioning as a leisure and recreational space between the urban centres (gentle eco-tourism with hiking, cycling etc.) This would impact on the entire project area.

Stories for the Karavanke region are all about landscape. The region has a relaxed feel to it – it is an oasis where the pace is slower, where time stands still. Tranquillity, a slower pace, the idea of “slowing down time” are all important trends. Another idea is to make the (hi)stories of the villages visible, with the villages and hamlets presenting themselves on a cultural level. One village specialised in making shoes, for instance, another one in sewing – craft, culture etc. Link to hiking and cycling.

An additional important topic that was mentioned by all interview partners is food and drink, which also communicates and links the experiential space of the Karavanke. Farm shops, regional products, the local inn culture, dairies in Slovenia etc. all come into play here.

Fishing was also mentioned a few times, as well as paragliding for the Slovenian side. Paraglide starting points could be made accessible from both sides. The advantage would be that paragliding starting points are located at attractive spots, which could in turn be linked to hiking – provided that the question of mobility is taken care of. Indoor and outdoor climbing was also an idea, as was horse-riding.

To guide visitors and to ensure visibility for all the offers in the region, all interviewees were in favour of the idea of a tourism map or guest card for the region. This would be seen as relevant for bookings and would offer additional excitement by enabling access to a space where a foreign language is spoken ("Adventure Passport"). Guest cards have the benefit of bundling many offers, which means that small providers are also given a platform. Essential components of guest cards are (cross-border) key products that offer added value for the guest card. In this case, such products could be organised luggage transfer services or mobility products. For instance, a transfer for your suitcase or bicycle could be booked using the guest card, maybe even at a reduced rate.

Guest cards are linked to the online registration system, promoting the active registration of guests. Such cards are primarily tools for guiding visitors. Weekly plan for guided/organised hiking or cycling tours in the region; also, cross-border mobility products that may be consumed only with a "Karavanke Card". Such a card would also contribute actively towards extending the radius of action and the length of stays.

There could be a joint database for information & offers, such as weather information/weather warnings, culture, sports with the info "What's nearby?", "What can I do?" Such a database would also make weather-independent activities visible and communicate them to guests in surrounding regions. The core problem behind this idea is not the lack of a digital databank solution, however, but the existing information vacuum.

A central organisational unit for the further development, coordination and marketing of the Karavanke region should be considered a requirement and could possibly take the form of a cross-border control unit, with representatives of both project areas in order to reduce language barriers and represent the interests of both countries equally. This is also reflected in the desire for increased opportunities for the cross-border design of strategies, as products & marketing activities must of course comply with the brand strategy of the province of Carinthia (retrospective deviations are problematic), in addition, all implementation measures must be incorporated in the individual marketing planning, and current developments and results – possibly also due to the language barrier – have been insufficiently communicated.

This may partly be a result of the different administrative structures of the two countries, with varying responsibilities and decision-making processes. The aim must therefore be to clarify regional framework conditions and interests from the start and to consider and communicate the required follow-up costs (maintenance, staff, administrative expenditure, service etc.).

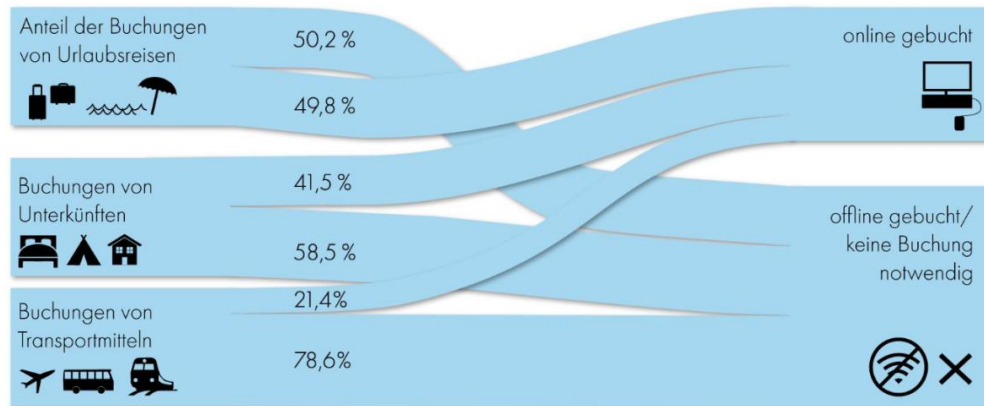
Beside the traditional, classic marketing measures, well-functioning online marketing initiatives must be part of an innovative, cross-border marketing portfolio, considering that the majority of holidaymakers obtain information from the Internet. Reaching this group offline is becoming increasingly difficult. Establishing a functioning digital platform should be considered a high priority as well as an essential sustainability criterion and constitutes an important building block for the innovative marketing of the Karavanke region.

The events surrounding Covid-19, among others, have shown that there is plenty of room for improvement in this context. People book and/or purchase what is visible. The rest is barely to not at all relevant (for existing customers).

The speed of change is ever-increasing, and every technological innovation has the potential of re-shuffling the cards, thus constituting both an opportunity and a challenge. In this context, too, there are synergies to be used, such as cost-sharing, native content, the bundling of services, added variety (to address a larger target group with "their" keywords) and much more.

Half of all holiday bookings is already made online, and the number is growing further. Here is just one of several graphics that reflect this:

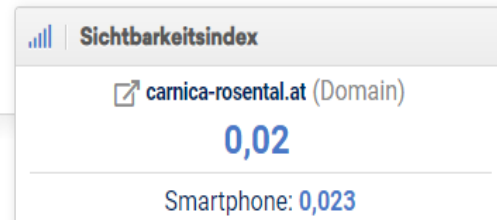
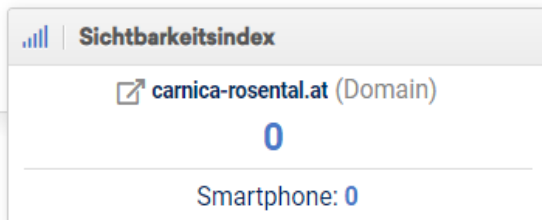
Buchung von Urlaubsreisen 2018



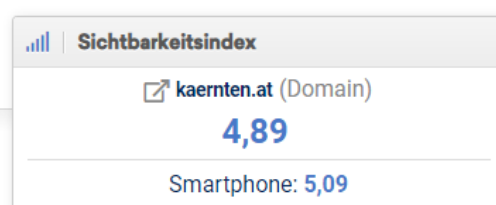
Quelle und Grafik: STATISTIK AUSTRIA, Ergebnisse aus den quartalsweisen Stichprobenerhebungen zum Urlaubs- und Geschäftsreiseverkehr 2018. Erstellt am 24.9.2019.

The importance of interregional platforms is shown particularly well in the following. Information on travel destinations come before pricing comparisons and accommodation.

This is opposed to the performance of existing platforms, which are currently ranking in relation to their own names for the respective regions, thereby mainly targeting customers who are already familiar with the offer/the region. The following shows just a rough overview (tool: Sistrix visibility index): Carnica Region Rosental GER (left) and AT (right)



As a sub-region integrated in the website of Kärnten Werbung – GER (left) AT (right):



The cooperation with Kärnten Werbung was initiated only recently and is intended to improve SEO performance.

2 STRATEGIC ORIENTATION

2.1 SWOT FOR KARAVANKE DESTINATION

STRENGTHS:	WEAKNESSES:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some recognized touristic destinations nearby • Historical connections between Slovenian and Austrian part of Karavanke • Preserved nature • Number of alpine huts and its developed offer, running water, quality cuisine etc. • Accessibility by road, train or air • Rich biodiversity • Abundance of hiking and cycling trails/routes • Technically easier hiking/biking trails/routes which are intended for wider population, families, children • Diverse geological structure • Historically connected destination • Peaks in Karavanke mountains are easier accessible • The views from peaks are extremely varied • Destination for all season hiking and biking • Mass tourism is not the issue in partner municipalities • Most of the partner municipalities are not in Triglav national park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of financial resources • Lack of central management system • Underdeveloped infrastructure in some places • Low local awareness • Cooperation in communication, coordination • Lack of joint strategic approach • Differences in institutional structures between countries • Terrain which is not so much appropriate for winter products • Alpine huts are frequently closed off season • Legislation and fragmented ownership for legalization of hiking/biking trails/routes • Part of Karavanke Mountain is not rideable by bike • Unknown tourism destination • Small and lack of suppliers along the Karavanke mountains • Lack of marketing
OPPORTUNITIES:	THREATS:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political dialogue and good neighbour relations • Positive trend of adventure tourism • Undiscovered destination • Connection with well-known Geopark in E Karavanke • Hiking and biking are prolonging season 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political situation in both countries • Strong destinations nearby, not enough interest for cooperation • Problems with infrastructure sitting with nature conservation organizations • Not enough financial resources

2.2 MISSION, VISION AND STRATEGIC GOALS

Mission of Karavanke region as a tourism destination:

To connect destinations and businesses on both sides of the border through active and green experiences for visitors, creating new opportunities for local communities and building long lasting cooperation by step by step actions of creating a cross border Karavanke tourism destination.

Since the Karavanke region at the moment doesn't have an organizational structure which would manage the destination, cooperation in the region is mostly build on the basics of joint business interests to develop joint tourism products.

For that reason, we can set up a short-term vision of the region based on tourism products:

To attract visitor seeking active, easily accessible and well managed experiences, connecting cross border Karavanke region, away from the crowds but close to locals and appreciating pristine nature and richness of spectacular views.

Long term vision of Karavanke as tourism destinations is to become:



Karavanke is a well-managed cross border tourism destination for a visitor seeking active, easily accessible and well managed experiences away from the crowds but close to locals and appreciating pristine nature and richness of spectacular views.

In order to fulfil the short and long-term vision we recognized three strategic goals, which are further down supported by the list of actions.

STRATEGIC GOAL		
DESTINATION MANAGEMENT	Setting up a management structure for the Karavanke region	...for joint product development and efficient marketing / promotion.
PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	Development of shared tourism products for the Karavanke region	...to connect the region based on shared experiences
PROMOTION	Determination of a shared identity; compilation of a marketing plan	...to position the region on the international market

3 TOURISM DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

The strategy for tourism development in the Karavanke region is to define guidelines and measures for the development of pre-identified tourism products as well as management and marketing, in order to link the cross-border region of the Karavanke as a standardised tourism destination. In order to achieve this goal, we have identified three key development areas that require more detailed consideration:

- A. management
- B. product development
- C. promotion

Each of the key development areas reinforce our strategic priorities with strategic and operational goals.

The strategy includes the long-term product development of subjects such as hiking, cycling and winter experience. The tourism potential of hikers and bikers has already been identified by the regional players and has been elaborated upon in previous processes within the region. For this reason, the authors decided on not including further discussions on the importance of these target groups for the Karavanke region in this paper. The project holders emphasised the importance of drawing up a plan for the implementation of a cross-border booking centre and the selection of a suitable agency for performing these tasks. This area was given strategic consideration in this paper. Digitalisation was also a theme that all interviewees addressed. It can thus be stated with confidence that there is a demand for and an awareness of the necessity of measures being taken in this respect.

Strategic and operational goals

priority	A. MANAGEMENT	B. PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT	C. PROMOTION
Strategic goal	Setting up a management structure for the Karavanke region	Development of shared tourism products for the Karavanke region	Determination of a shared identity; compilation of a marketing plan
Results	...for joint product development and efficient marketing / promotion	...to connect the region based on shared experiences	...to position the region on the international market
Operational goal	A.1 Setting up a management of the region/products A.2 Setting up sustainable guidance for the region A.3 Setting up a booking centre	B.1 Development of a trekking product: Around Karavanke lakes B.2 Development of a Trans Karavanke biking product B.3 Development of a hiking product B.4 Other possible products	C.1 Identification of joint identity and story of the region C.2 Identification of product identities

3.1. A. Management

Karavanke region is a cross border region connecting Slovenia and Austria with a range of mountains. Region is divided in municipalities on both sides of the border: Kranjska Gora, Jesenice, Žirovnica, Radovljica, Tržič, Jezersko, Arnoldstein, Finkenstein, St. Jakob, Feistritz, Ferlach and St. Margareten. Tourism is being managed within municipal councils in smaller municipalities or as separate destination management bodies in more developed destinations. Some of the municipalities are involved in larger destinations management organizations such as the Julian Alps (Kranjska Gora, Jesenice, Radovljica) and Kamnik Savinja Alps (Jezersko).

Priority	MANAGEMENT
Strategic goal	Setting up a management structure for the Karavanke region
Results	...for joint product development and efficient marketing / promotion
Operative target	A.1 Setting up a management of the region/products A.2 Setting up sustainable guidance for the region A.3 Setting up a booking centre

A.1 SETTING UP A MANAGEMENT OF THE REGION/PRODUCTS

The main task of any future management organisation of the Karavanke region has to be the definition of a shared, cross-border goal as well as the purpose behind it. Despite its high potential for touristic use and the cross-border activities initiated to date, the Karavanke region has so far not generated awareness on a touristic or emotional level. The region therefore does not provide guests with a reason for booking, as it lacks an identity and (visible) offers.

To ensure that this experiential space is not just brought to life on a touristic level and to safeguard sustainable, long-term cooperation, all cross-border products and measures must be supported by a functioning, activity- and target group-orientated mobility concept, indeed one of the key measures in the overall plan. To put it differently: There is no point in a new product if the associated mobility requirements are not fulfilled. Mobility is thus a key theme for the region, as it also affects all other areas (product development, promotion).

The importance of a central organisational unit for the further development and marketing of the Karavanke region is undisputed. The Carinthian side wishes for strategic participation, also because products and marketing activities will have to be consistent with the marketing strategy of the province of Carinthia, and because the consequences of the individual measures in terms of budget, administration, staff etc. will have to be resolved in advance. With a focus on cross-border cooperation and projects, the communication structures of future organisations will also have to be evaluated and adjusted. This is a particularly important point as deficits in the information flow during the implementation and post-processing phase have already been noted during approved projects.

The development and implementation of a booking & online platform that builds on strategic goals and is technologically flawless with regard to SEO & keyword strategy should follow once strategy, mobility and communication have been fully resolved.

The development and establishment of regional products can also be a way to develop management structure. Destinations and businesses are already working together on joint tourism experiences and for that a different ways of management structures are and can be developed which in the future can act as a stepping stone to destination management.

To ensure success and visibility, identity-creating measures (internal & external marketing, designation of the experiential space, exchange of information & training etc.) are essential. These must be specified and firmly set out in a next step. Defining existing products and services and making them visible in a format that is compact and clearly laid out, both for the visitor and for regional service providers.

As a next step, the evaluation of the entire touristic offer is also required for online presentation, where individual offers may be communicated more easily based on structure and filtering options. This is also important because guests perceive a bundle of services as an overall product. Creating this product is therefore a key aspect of strategic marketing efforts.

In order for the destination of Karavanke to be established and operate as a joint tourism destination, a joint management structure needs to be set up which would determine a joint development plan and set up a joint financial structure. The question is in what way, with what kind of partnership, under whose leadership and what terms it would should be set up.

More options have been identified.

OPTION 1: Development of new cross border Karavanke management office

To be able to set up a cross border management office, all partners on the Slovene and Austrian side would have to agree and work on development of a model. The latter would have to guarantee the needed funds for development projects and marketing.

According to the interview findings the will to establish such a joint body is rather low. A number of destinations are already a part of other regional destination management structures such as the Julian Alps and Kamnik Savinja Alps for which they need to provide findings and contribute to development and promotional activities. The fact that the structure should work as a cross border office raises even more questions.

Additional management structure would also increase the needs for funding and would present additional work for destination management offices. The dilemma is also who would take over the process of establishment of joint management structure. The interviews showed there is low or no will of the involved partners to commit to this task.

However, since some of the destinations like Tržič don't belong to any of regional destination offices and since the region of Karavanke has a number of advantages and could position itself on the international markets, we believe that further efforts and discussions about such options should remain on the agenda of project partners. The time to start with activities of setting up such a management structure is still unclear and set in the future. It could start with light organizational activities such as engaging one person on half time work to start with the first steps on building closer cooperation and some joint activities with the region.

OPTION 2: Extension of existing regional destination management organizations such as the Julian Alps or Geopark Karavanke to the entire Karavanke region

This option depends on the willingness of partners and management structures of regional destination offices mentioned. This option has been already discussed, but at the moment none of the management structures agreed to it. Such cooperation would definitely present a good approach since it would lower the costs while optimizing the organizational work. With new destinations and partners joining, the budget of regional destination offices would increase which would give them more options to further develop and promote joint tourism offer.

Karavanke region is already a part of both the Julian Alps and Kamnik Savinja Alps in geographical terms. Furthermore, some of the project partners are already members of mentioned regional destination offices. Kranjska Gora, Jesenica and Radovljica are members of the Julian Alps office, while Jezersko is a member of the Kamnik Savinja Alps office.

On the other hand, by including more destinations and extending the surface they cover, existing regional management structures fear that this might undermine their position and increase concurrence on the international markets. With a bigger number of partners organization structures would have to change and new business models and cooperation challenges would arise.

The conclusion is that at this moment the interest of following this option is in general low. Nevertheless, the discussion is open and that there is will for cooperation in larger regional organizations, especially regarding product development.

OPTION 3: Development of joint tourism products and development of management structures around the product

Most of the stakeholders in interview agreed that the first and at this moment the most visible management structure in Karavanke region would be to build management structures around each product which will be develop din the future. Meaning that stakeholders (destinations and businesses) included in development of a specific tourism product would form a product cluster based on joint business interests. Product cluster would be formed on the basics of contract among partners determining relations, obligations and rights. Each partner would participate for product development and marketing and product cluster would be able to run for different funding. Product cluster could also take over the role of setting up a booking centre for offer around the product.

Some of the already existing tourism products in the region have already developed booking centres. Meaning that similar products in the region of Karavanke could partner with booking operation offices to investigate the option of joint booking or using already developed booking structures.

Since this was identified as the most visible option the management structure activities were added to each product development action plan.

Operational objective A.1 Management	
Quick overview	In order to being able to set up a long term of cooperation a management structure for destination Karavanke needs to be established, an agreement on management office needs to be determined and division of roles and obligations need to be agreed on. Further the management office should set up a yearly working plan agreed with all partners, carry out activities and report back to all partners.
Action A.1.1	Setting up a management structure First step needs to be an agreement of the form of management within the destination Karavanke agreed with all partners (Options 1 - 3). Based on agreement a joint agreement needs to be signed and management structure needs to be developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management body (who and with what role), • Board of directors as a supervision body, • Roles of partners and members (obligations and responsibilities).
Timing:	2021 - 2022
Involved partners:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica All partners
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds • Participation from all partners
Action A.1.2	Setting up a management office Depending on the form of management structure (destination or product) management office can be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • new organization,

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • on of the organizations taking over the role of management for destination Karavanke or for certain product. <p>Management office needs to have a clear role and with a division of responsibilities.</p>
Timing:	2021
Involved partners:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica All partners
Action A.1.3	<p>Setting up financial and operational plan</p> <p>In order for the management office to be operational a yearly plan of operations needs to be set up together with needed budget and financial sources. The budget and action plan need to be developed in cooperation with all partners and confirmed by the board of directors.</p>
Timing:	2021
Involved partners:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica All partners
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds • Participation from all partners • Projects

A.2 SETTING UP GUIDANCE FOR DEVELOPMENT OF SUSTAINABLE TOURISM DEVELOPMENT

Slovenia developed Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism – Slovenia Green program which is helping destinations and business to evaluate and implement sustainable tourism management.

Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism - Slovenia Green

The Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism's (GSST) key strategic objective is to introduce sustainable models to Slovenian tourism. All the objectives of GSST's strategic guidelines are in line with sustainable development and demonstrate concern for the economic, social, cultural and natural environment. As a tool GSST carries out the following tasks under the SLOVENIA GREEN umbrella brand:

- brings together all efforts directed towards the sustainable development of tourism in Slovenia,
- offers tools to destinations and tourism businesses that enable them to evaluate and improve their sustainability endeavours,
- promotes these green endeavours through the SLOVENIA GREEN brand.

The scheme's key strategic objective is to introduce sustainable models at two levels: destinations (municipalities and parks) and tourism service providers (hotels, tourist attractions and travel agencies). All the objectives of the strategic guidelines are in line with sustainable development and demonstrate concern for the economic, social, cultural and natural environment.

The scheme has five characteristics, which include:

- a comprehensive and developmental approach;
- a national character;
- an international comparability;
- a foundation on global criteria: the Green Destinations Standard and the European Tourism Indicators System (ETIS); and
- a tool for positioning and promotion.

GSST is managed by the Slovenian Tourist Board. STB is responsible for development of the scheme, which is carried out by the accredited partner, offers educational support, carried out by the accredited partner and also establishes promotional channels in the international tourism market for the promotion of Slovenia Green destinations and service providers. Its accredited partner, Institute Factory of Sustainable Tourism GoodPlace, has a license to make assessments using the Green Destinations Standard and is a Green Destinations partner.

Process that led recognition that change was necessary

The Slovenian Tourist Board has pledged itself to sustainable development already in 2009 with the strategic guidelines and actions for sustainable development. In 2010, a Manual for hotels for implementation of sustainable business models was published and in 2011, a Partnership declaration for sustainable development was solemnly signed. In 2014, the national strategic guideline - Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism - was adopted and in doing so, Slovenia has taken an important step towards the better sustainable development of the entire country. Businesses and destinations are now guided into switching towards sustainable, i.e. green, development.

Description of the scheme

The GSST is based on global criteria, is globally recognized, and enables international comparison. It operates on two levels, level of destinations, including protected areas, attractions and level of tourism businesses (hotels and tour operators/travel agencies). The levels are closely connected - the destination motivates key interested parties to operate sustainably and carry eco-labels, since a green destination can only be credible if it has a critical mass of certified service providers.

Destinations, protected areas and businesses undergo sustainability assessment after which they are awarded a Slovenia Green label. Processes and conditions vary, depending on the type of organization. Destinations follow a highly structured process of workshops, on-line tool, and questionnaires, a combination of Green Destination standard requirements and European Tourism Indicators System, after which they are awarded gold, silver and bronze certificates. Since the GSST is process oriented, all awarded destinations must regularly report to the manager and submit a sustainability action plan. Businesses on the other hand are encouraged to obtain one of the 6 eco labels the GSST endorses: Bio Hotels, EMAS, EU Ecolabel, Green Key, Green Globe or Travelife, after which they receive a Slovenia Green label. Protected areas can choose between 2 international labels (Europarc charter, Unesco Man and Biosphere Programme) or decide to follow the process for destinations.

On the level of destinations, the scheme has merged two existing, reliable and internationally recognized systems, ETIS (by European Commission) and GDS (by Green Destinations), into one, additionally adding a special section called national character. Destinations are assessed against the standard once every three years while regular annual reporting on progress (as set in the action plan) is required by STB. National character and green USP, as identified by each destination, is used by STB in international promotional activities.

The process of certification of the destination must follow 11 steps. Firstly, the destination must assign a Green Coordinator, then a Green Team must be formed, which together are responsible for raising awareness of the initiative. The fourth step is to sign the Slovenia Green Policy. After this, surveys must be conducted to collect information and data on the destination regarding criteria in six action fields of the green scheme. The certificate comprises 100 criteria and 131 indicators. After the data has been gathered and the results analysed, an action plan is written, including the definition of the local character and its green Unique Selling Proposition (USP). The final two steps comprise the on-site visit by external auditors and the implementation of the action plan by the Green Team.

Implementation

The scheme has first been implemented in Slovenia in 2015 with the first/pilot call for businesses and destinations. Two more calls followed, making it an annual event. There are already 37 destinations, 24 tourism service providers, 3 parks, and 2 travel agencies that have been awarded the Slovenia Green certificate. At the moment, another 14 destinations is in the process of obtaining the Slovenia Green label. Up to date list and other information about GSST is available here: <https://www.slovenia.info/en/business/green-scheme-of-slovenian-tourism>

Success story

So far, the story about GSST has been a story of success. Not only has the scheme been presented at numerous international conferences and occasions as the approach to systematically address sustainable tourism development, it has also won awards such as the National Geographic Destination Leadership award in 2017. Last year Slovenia underwent a sustainability assessment within the GSTC Destination Criteria and was declared the world's first green destination, achieving 96% compliance with the criteria.

Implementation in Karavanke

In the region of Karavanke some destinations have already gained the Slovenia Green Destinations Award: Kranjska Gora, Radovljica, Tržič and also some businesses the Slovenia Green Accommodation Award: Design Rooms Pr'Gavedarjo, Ramada Resort Kranjska Gora, Camp Špik, WoodHouse B&B. Since the Green Scheme of Slovenian tourism is wide and very effective we suggest to motivate destinations

and business in to joining instead of developing additional criteria for development of sustainable tourism in Karavanke.

Development of sustainable tourism in products

On the level of different products some specific criteria which would address the sustainability issues of the product could be develop and introduced. This could be:

- All tourism products need to include soft mobility solutions in all parts of the tourism product.
- All tourism products need to CO2 neutral, meaning that CO2 footprint needs to be calculated and compensation needs to be introduced.
- NO single use plastics on any of the tours.
- All guest informed about sustainable tourism in Karavanke, drinking water, key values.
- All guides need to be trained on subject of sustainable tourism.

Mobility

Mobility has to be seen as the common theme running through all cross-border products and measures. A functioning mobility concept is thus one of the most essential success factors and a fundamental sustainability criterion for successful project implementation. Not only would it link and open up the entire experiential space for touristic usage but would also ensure the sustainable future development of tourism in the region. When we talk about the region, we must therefore first of all talk about mobility and clarify how individual experiential spaces and offers may be reached. The starting point is the realisation and/or extension of the train link between Villach and Jesenice, followed by the exploration of more general themes such as transfers, car-sharing, e-bikes, charging stations, group taxis, hiking/bike shuttles etc. Karavanke could be an innovative trailblazer in this context as a "green region". Sustainability in product development refers to the longevity and maintenance of products as well as the mindful use of resources, taking natural framework conditions into account and doing without exaggerated, artificial "stagings". In this context, mobility, an awareness of quality and environmental protection, but also a functioning, sustainable organisation and communication (on an internal and external level) must be reflected in all measures taken. All participants have expressed an interest in joining a functioning sustainability programme, as long as the benefit will exceed the cost.

Operational objective A.2 Sustainable Guidance	
Quick overview	Sustainable development of tourism was identified by all partners as a joint direction. But countries Slovenia and Austria have different national frameworks for development of sustainable tourism. In Slovenia sustainable tourism is developed and reinforced through the Slovenia Green for both destinations and business. In Austria national program is addressing only the business. A new and joint sustainably scheme for Karavanke region was therefore not planed and sustainable measures should be introduced on the level of tourism offer.
Action A.2.1	<p>Destination development of sustainable tourism</p> <p>In Slovenia a national Green scheme of sustainable tourism Slovenia Green proved to be a very efficient tool. In Karavanke most of included destinations on Slovenian side are already included in Slovenia Green. Activities on Slovenian side will go in the direction of motivating destinations and business to join Slovenia Green.</p> <p>In Austria the national program of sustainable development in tourism is focused on business only. Business in Austrian side of Karavnke could be motivated to join the national program. For destinations a presentation of existing global certification programs could be organised.</p>

Timing:	2021
Involved partners:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica All partners
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds • Participation from all partners
Action A.2.2	Sustainable tourism in product development Some of the measures of sustainable tourism should be introduced on development of all tourism produces. New management body needs to confirm the criteria and prepare guidance for all products for implementation. Sustainable guidance need to be included in promotional activates of all partners.
Timing:	2021
Involved partners:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica All partners
Action A.2.3	Soft mobility As already stated soft mobility is a key concept which needs to connect the region and support development activities of each tourism product. Management body of each tourism product should identify key mobility issues and prepare recommendations for further development. Recommendations should be presented to all stakeholders in order to identify potential financial resources.
Timing:	2021
Carrier:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica
Involved partners:	All partners

A.3 SETTING UP KARAVANKE DESTINATION/BOOKING CENTRE

According to WTO, a destination is a unique place where a visitor spends at least one night and exhibit tourism products such as attractions, support services, and tourism resources complete with defined management, physical and administrative boundaries, and a well-known image.

Since Karavanke destination do not have jet defined management, physical and administrative boundaries, and a well-known image – brand, we cannot consider Karavanke as destination.

Without destination it is impossible to do destination marketing and destination branding, which is aimed at promoting a tourist destination through the building of a linked brand.

Since the booking is one of the last steps in marketing/sales we can assume that there is no point to have destination booking centre without destination. This was also the conclusion of almost all interviews with the main stakeholders in the destination and partners in the project.

On the other hand, almost all interviewees agreed that first they should start connecting on the product level and that booking centres can be established on the specific products that were and will be established in the future.

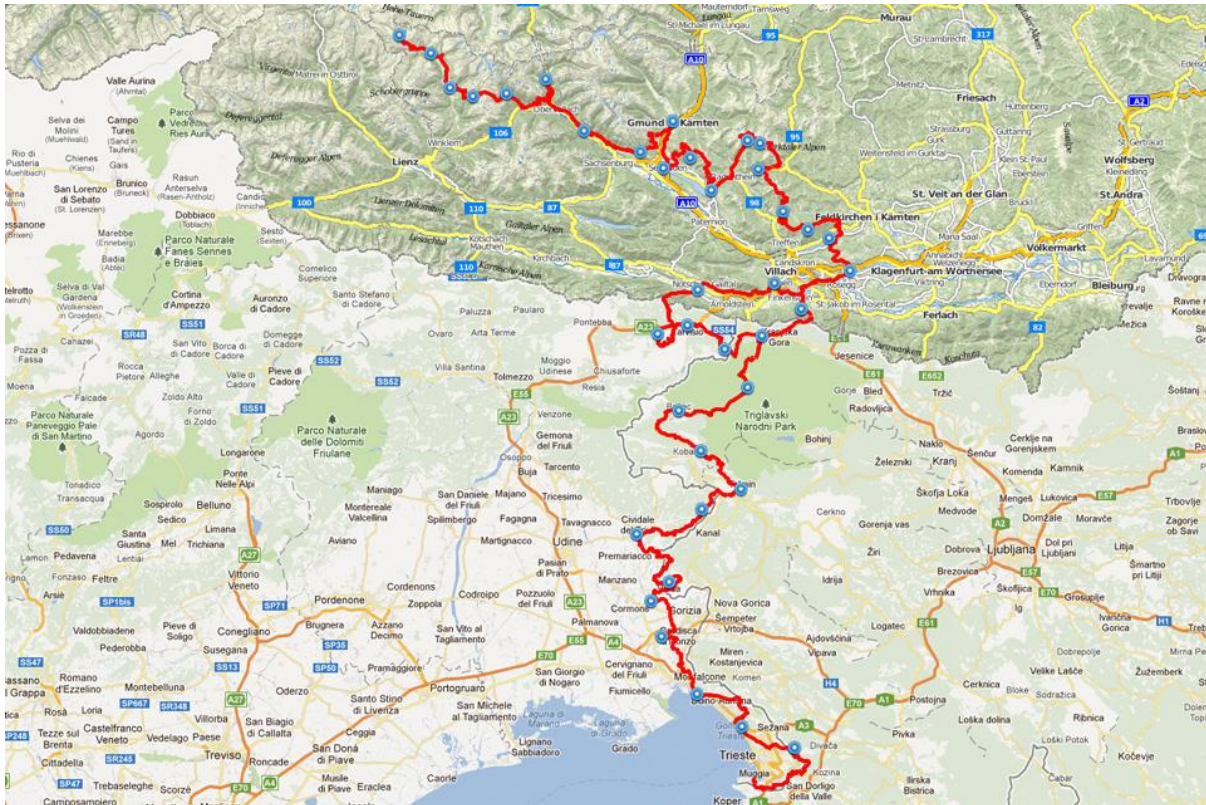
This was the case also with Julian Alps DMO which was informally established over 25 years ago and was at the beginning focusing mainly on sharing common marketing costs mostly on product level. After many years of successful cooperation and also later on common product development they established formal DMO with common product booking centre for the product they developed together – Julijana Trail. In next years they will create new common products for cycling etc. So even after so many years they still do not have common booking centre for all products.

Probably the best practice case study on cross border product development and common marketing and sales in the nearby is Alpe Adria Trail which is described below.

GOOD PRACTICE CASE STUDY – ALPE ADRIA TRAIL

A nearby good-practice case study is the Alpe Adria Trail, which connects three countries (Austria, Slovenia, and Italy) and was established 2012. It is 750 km long and starts in Grossglockner, Austria, and is finished in Trieste, Italy. It has 43 stages — each from 10-30 km long.

Maintenance of the trail is covered directly from the budgets of the tourism board in Slovenia, where Alpe Adria Trail passes — for instance: Kranjska Gora, Soča Valley, Brda etc. In the case of Soča Valley, maintenance is done two times a year for four stages (100 km). The expenditure is 5000 EUR per year.



MARKETING:

The Marketing Budget depends on the number of stages within a country and is centrally managed through an Austrian partner.

THESE IS THE MARKETING BUDGET FROM THE BEGINNING UTILL NOW:

	Slovenia	Kärnten Werbung	Friuli Venezia Giulia	Total
2012	46.000	140.000	166.000	252.000
2013	105.000	330.000	150.000	585.000
2014	105.000	330.000	150.000	585.000
2015	80.000	230.000	110.000	420.000
2016	80.000	230.000	110.000	420.000
2017	80.000	230.000	110.000	420.000
2018	80.000	230.000	110.000	420.000
2019	80.000	230.000	110.000	420.000

In the case of Slovenia, the marketing budget is provided from the Slovenia Tourism Board directly to Kärnten Werbung.

RETURN ON INVESTMENT – RESULTS:

Most of the hikers on Alpe Adria Trials decide to go hiking on their own, just 15% of them decide to book through the trail's three booking centres (one in each country). For Slovenia, all the bookings are done by the Soča Valley Tourism board.

In 2019, Alpe Adria Trail generated 16,000 guests, who spent 91,200 overnights, and created over 8,000,000 EUR revenue. Slovenia, generated 25% of all overnights revenue. Slovenia's sections of the Alpe Adria Trail created 22,800 overnights and 2,000,000 EUR revenue. An average hiker on Alpe Adria Trail spends 88 EUR per day.

Numbers for Soča Valley, Slovenia's official booking centre for the Alpe Adria Trail:
The commission already represents important income for destination.

	Bookings	Guests	Overnights	Average stay
2013	12	80	248	3,1
2014	29	129	402	3,1
2015	99	360	1.123	3,12
2016	107	371	1.359	3,7
2017	194	546	2.416	4,42
2018	247	687	3.338	4,85
2019	260	706	4.039	5,72

Booking centre for Karavanke /Karawanken destination

Setting up a booking centre for the whole destination of Karavanke is closely connected to the development of joint management structure. Without the management office, development a joint booking centre will not be possible. And even in case the management office would be developed the question of visibility of such booking centre remains. Booking centre needs to have a wide reach and efficient access to visitors to generate enough bookings. Alternative means (like regional visitors' card) which would motivate visitors to book across the region seem more visible to be developed. Besides that a booking options of tourism products, which will be developed in the region, should be set up as an important sales engine.

Regional visitors' card

The either non-existent or non-visible offer of the Karavanke region has created a wish for some sort of shared database of information, products & services. Knowledge of such products and services in the vicinity would also make activities visible that are independent of weather conditions. Whether the creation of such a database makes sense would have to be investigated further. One essential to-do item is the collection and representation of the region's total output.

This requirement would be satisfied by a regional visitors' card for tourists that is warmly recommended as a marketing instrument. Another advantage lies in the data evaluation opportunities that come with such a card, for instance the analysis of visitor streams and the associated offers. It would also greatly facilitate access of a foreign-language space. Orientation safety is also provided by the card. Another benefit is the option of bundling many offers on a single platform, which helps raise the profile of smaller service providers, making them part of the overall theme. Essential components of guest cards are (cross-border) key products that offer added value for the guest card. In this case, such products could be organised luggage transfer or mobility products. A Karavanke Card would also contribute actively towards extending the radius of action and the length of stays.

Bookings for different tourism products

Each of suggested tourism products to be developed need to a booking option which would serve the needs of the products. In the section of Product development, we identified all options.

Cycling product AROUND KARAVANKE LAKES

If the decision is made that the product will be offered in the market, its brand name will be protected and it will only be offered by one or two partners (if two it means the Slovenian part is offered by a Slovenian partner and the Austrian part is offered by an Austrian partner), a booking centre must be created. Booking centre should have its own pricing policy, partner structure etc. The role of a booking centre can be played by a public institution like in the case of Alpe Adria Trail (DMO Soča Valley) or by a private company. The product can also be offered openly so that all companies (tour operators, travel agencies or DMOs) can offer it to their customers on B2B or B2C level. There can also be a middle way where companies that are offering the product on the market and use protected brand name must give something in return or/and must comply with some quality standards.

Biking product TRANS KARAVANKE MTB TRAIL

The only way to control the sales of the product is to protect its brand name at least on the EU level. There were already some discussions about who should be responsible for booking of this product. The DMO Julian Alps showed some interest. They are willing to offer it together with the Julian Alps loop. If this option will be chosen there must be an agreement made between the DMO Julian Alps and the local alpine associations who are responsible for the maintenance, about how the profit will be split. The product can also be offered to other tour operators or travel agencies, but a certain agreement about the budget for marketing and sharing the profit must be agreed in advance.

For the Trans Karavanke tourism product agreement with Alpine Association of Slovenia for bookings was agreed. At the moment inquiry must be sent via email and are handled personally. In the future, if there will be enough demand, the booking procedure will be changed and done more automatically.

Hiking product HIKING IN KARAVANKE MOUNTAIN RANGE

The only way to control the sales of the product is to protect its brand name at least on the EU level. There were already some discussions who should be responsible for booking of this product. Few options were identified:

- Via Alpina Purple: Outdoor Slovenia is managing the trail and would like to continue doing it;
- The Slovenian Mountain Trail – Alpine Association of Slovenia is looking for private travel agency or a tour operator to take this role.
- Panoramaweg Südalpen: Carnica – Trail Angels are responsible for the marketing and sales of it. Trail Angels (<https://www.trail-angels.com>) are responsible for booking of the trail. The automatic booking centre was developed for this product: <https://www.bookyourtrail.com/trail/panoramaweg-suedalpen>

Panoramaweg Súdalpen
Live Check and online Booking

June July Aug Sept

Start date: ☒ Incl. Arrival day

Start stage:

End stage:

Category: Classic Board: Half board

Trail Service: ☒ Mobility Service ☐ Guide ☐ travelling dogs

☒ Back transfer

Your room occupancy

Room 1: 1 0

Adults Children (6-14 Years)

[add room](#)

[START LIVE CHECK NOW](#)

There must be an agreement between the partner who is responsible for the maintenance and the one responsible for sales about how the profit is split. The product can also be offered to other tour operators or travel agencies, but a certain agreement about the budget for marketing and sharing the profit must be agreed in advance.

Operational objective A.3 Booking centre	
Quick overview	According to the findings, a development of booking centre should go in two directions: development of Regional visitors card and booking options of different tourism products.
Action A.3.1	Regional visitors' card In order to set up a regional visitors' card some actions need to be set up: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of potential interested partners for further development of the product; • Setting up management process, • Determination of the budget and action plan; • Product development together with marketing and sales;
Timing:	2022
Involved partners:	BSC Kranj in cooperation with Region Carnica All partners
Action A.3.2	Booking centres for different products Booking centre for each product needs to be developed according to the specifics and interest of partners. For each product a set of actions need to be developed: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification of potential interested partners • Setting up management process, • Setting up contract between partners with responsibilities and provisions, • Determination of the budget and action plan; • Development of booking centre, marketing
Timing:	2022
Involved partners:	Management office of different products All partners included in the product.

3.2 B. Product development

The strategy for tourism development in the Karavanke region is to define guidelines and measures for the development of pre-identified tourism products as well as management and marketing, in order to link the cross-border region of the Karavanke as a standardised tourism destination.

The strategy includes the long-term product development of subjects such as hiking, cycling and winter experience. The tourism potential of hikers and bikers has already been identified by the regional players and has been elaborated upon in previous processes within the region. For this reason, the authors decided on not including further discussions on the importance of these target groups for the Karavanke region in this paper.

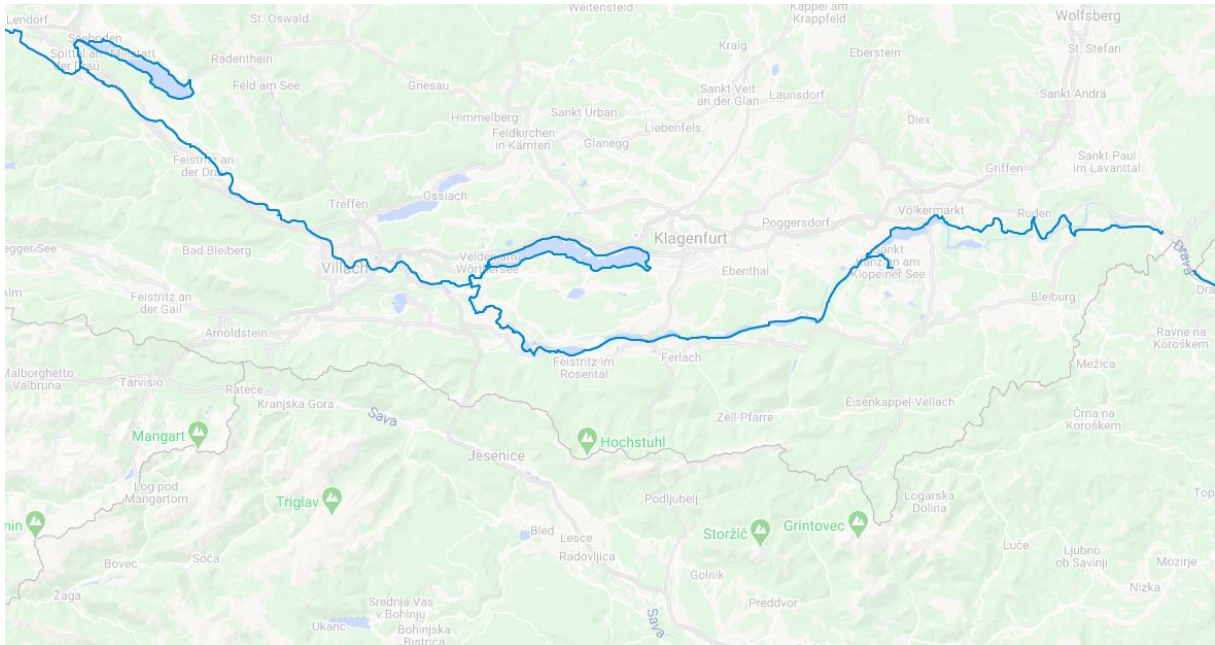
The T-MONA survey, conducted by the Austrian National Tourist Office (Österreich Werbung), has investigated what visitors appreciate the most about Austria as a holiday destination. The five most frequently listed reasons for a holiday in Austria were: mountains, scenery, hiking trails, lakes, rivers and good air quality. Slovenia offers the very same repertory.

Priority	PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT
Strategic goal	Development of shared tourism products for the Karavanke region
Results	...to connect the region based on shared experiences
Operative target	B.1 Development of a cycling product AROUND KARAVANKE LAKES B.2 Development of the biking product TRANS KARAVANKE MTB TRAIL B.3 Development of hiking product HIKING IN KARAVANKE MOUNTAIN RANGE B.4 other potential cross border products for future development

B.1 Development of a cycling product AROUND KARAVANKE LAKES

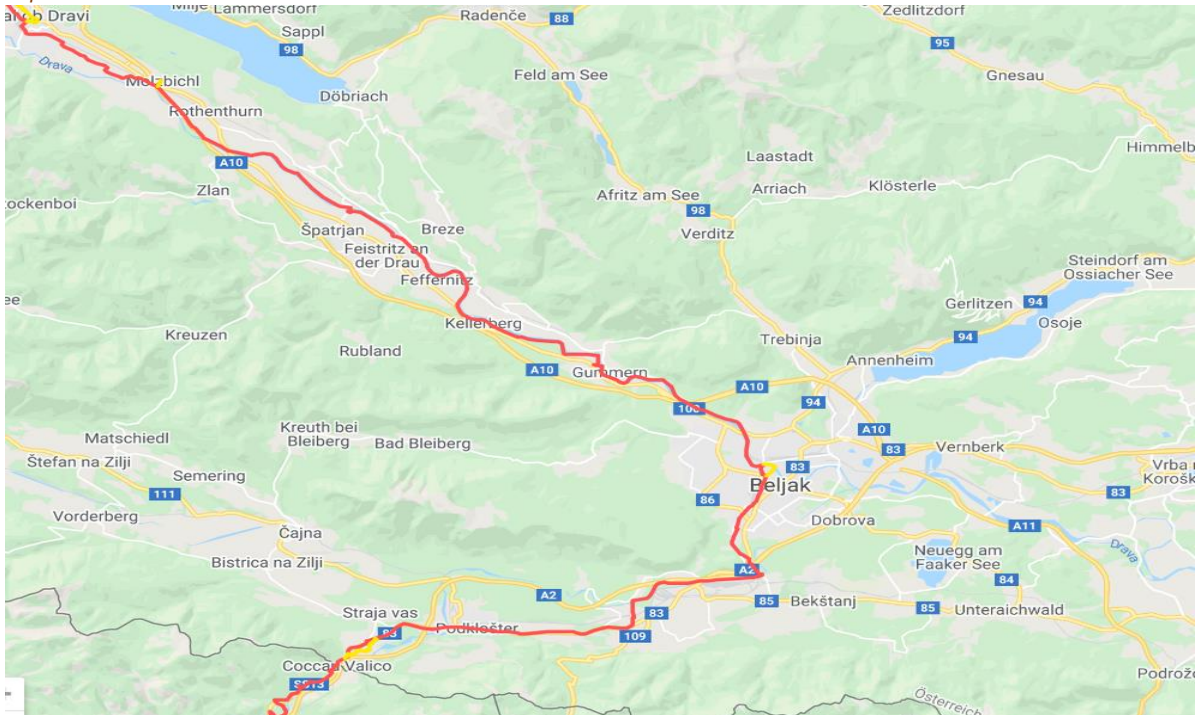
There are 3 main long-distance cycling routes that create backbone of cycling product in Karavanke mountain range:

Drava cycling route



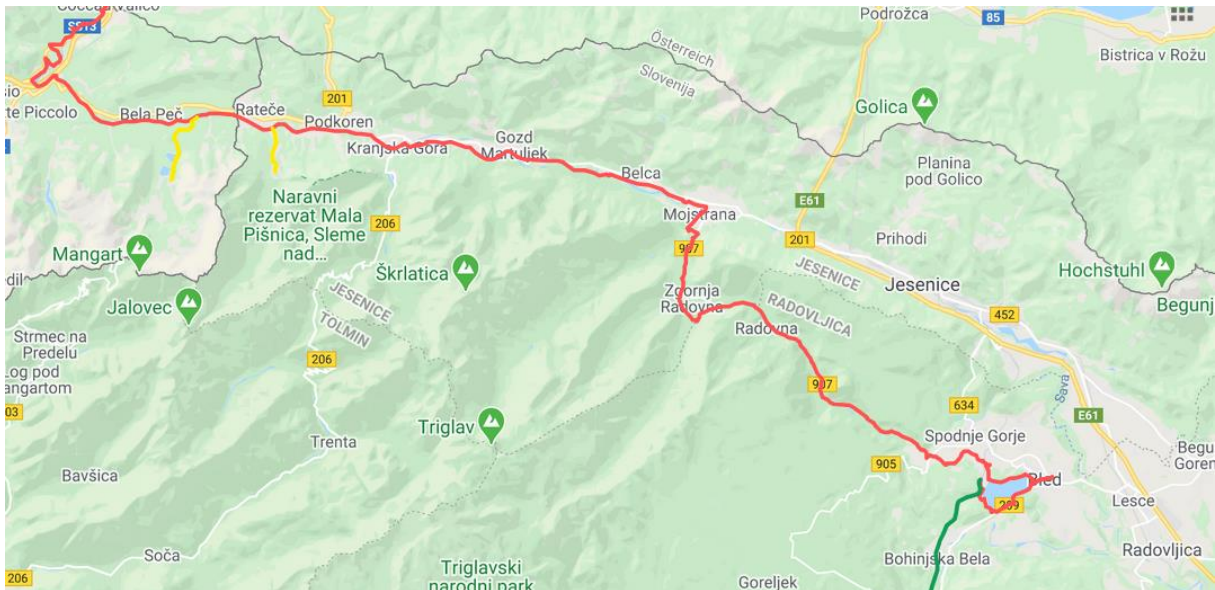
It is in total 510 km long and consists of 7 stages. It starts in Italy, continues across Austria, passes Slovenia and finishes in Croatia. Every year over 120.000 people cycle on this route.

Alpe Adria Ciclovía



This long-distance route starts in Salzburg and finishes at Grado, at the Adriatic Sea. It runs through Austria and Italy. Every year over 77.000 cyclists are cycling on this route.

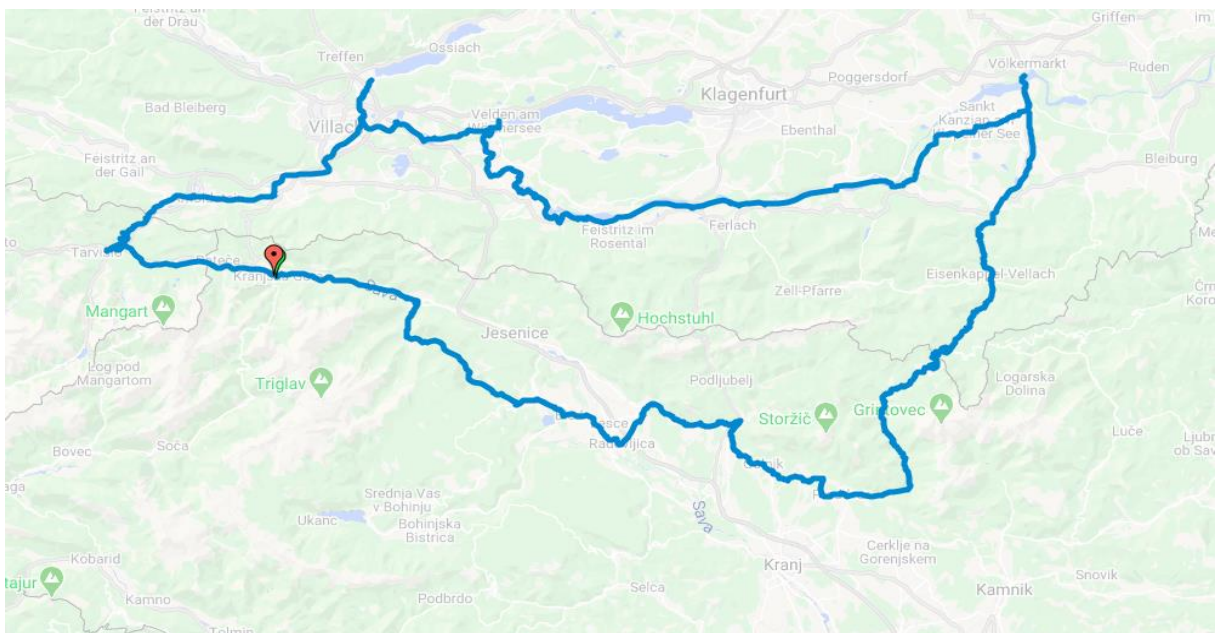
Cycling route from Rateče to Jesenice / Bled



This is a dedicated cycling route that starts on the Slovenian – Italian border and passes through Rateče, Kranjska Gora and Mojstrana. After Mojstrana, one route variation runs towards Bled on a quiet asphalt road, while the other one runs towards Jesenice on a dedicated cycling road. In 2018, over 80.000 cyclists picked this route.

The route:

If we join the main upper cycling backbones on the Slovenian and Austrian side into one product and connect them, we get a well-developed long-distance cycling route around Karavanke mountain range, which also connects its famous lakes.



The existing long-distance cycling routes and the proposed new route around Karavanke Lakes, can be viewed in a Google maps document: <https://tinyurl.com/karavanke-biking>

Cycling route stages:

Longer and more difficult version of the proposed stages

In total km: 290 km

In total elevation m: 2900 m

- Stage 1: Kranjska Gora – Bled/Radovljica: 37 km, 260 m
- Stage 2: Bled/Radovljica – Križe/Tržič: 35 km, 26km, 450 m + circle around Bled Lake 8km + 100 m
- Stage 3: Križe/Tržič – Zgornje Jezersko: 37 km, 780 m
- Stage 4: Zgornje Jezersko – Völkermark: 44km, 500 m
- Stage 5: Völkermark – Ferlach: 36 km, 300 m + circle around Wolkelmarker Strausee: 22 km, 250 m
- Stage 6: Ferlach – Velden am Wörther See: 37 km, 300m
- Stage 7: Velden am Wörther See – Annheim: 20 km, 170 m + circle around Wörthersee 50 km, 420 m or around Ossiacher See 28 km, 220 m
- Stage 8: Annheim – Kranjska Gora: 55km, 720 m

Shorter version of proposed stages

In total km: 207 km

In total elevation m: 2000 m

- Stage 1: Kranjska Gora – Bled/Radovljica: 37 km, 260 m
- Stage 2: Bled/Radovljica by train to Völkermark and circle around Wolkelmarker Strausee: 22 km, 250 m
- Stage 3: Völkermark – Ferlach: 36 km, 300 m
- Stage 4: Ferlach – Velden am Wörther See: 37 km, 300 m
- Stage 5: Velden am Wörther See – Annheim: 20 km, 170 m + circle around Wörthersee 50 km, 420 m or around Ossiacher See 28 km, 220 m
- Annheim – Kranjska Gora: 55km, 720 m

Infrastructure

- Section 1 Völkermarkt – Arnoldstein: Austrian part of the route is well developed since it follows the Drava Cycling route (certified with 5 stars out of 5 according to the ADFC).
- Section 2 Arnoldstein – Tarvisio – Kranjska Gora: The Italian part presents a section of the Alpe-Adria Ciclovía, which is well developed – it is a dedicated cycling road.
- Section 3 Kranjska Gora to Mojstrana: well developed – a dedicated cycling road
- Section 4 Mostrana to Bled: an asphalt side road where there is almost no traffic
- Section 5 Bled – Tržič – Jezersko: a side road with limited traffic
- Section 6 Jezersko – Völkermark: main road busy with traffic during high season

Maintenance and marking

- Section 1 Völkermarkt – Arnoldstein: well-maintained and marked
- Section 2 Arnoldstein – Tarvisio – Kranjska Gora: well-maintained and marked
- Section 3 Kranjska Gora to Mojstrana: well-maintained and marked
- Section 4 Mostrana to Bled: well-maintained but not marked
- Section 5 Bled – Tržič – Jezersko: well-maintained but not marked
- Section 6 Jezersko – Völkermark: well-maintained but not marked

Marketing and sales:

- Section 1 Völkermarkt – Arnoldstein: part of Drava cycling route (<https://www.drauradweg.com/en/>), in 2015 it welcomed over 120.000 cyclists.
- Section 2 Arnoldstein – Tarvisio – Kranjska Gora: till Tarvisio it is a part of Alpe Adria Ciclovía (<https://www.alpe-adria-radweg.com/en/>), in 2015 it welcomed over 77.000 cyclists.
- Section 3 Kranjska Gora to Mojstrana: part of a dedicated cycling route which starts in Rateče and ends in Jesenice, in 2018 it welcomed almost 80.000 cyclists (data from DRSi)
- Section 4 Mostrana to Bled: offered in some cycling tours by tour operators and travel agencies
- Section 5 Bled – Tržič – Jezersko: offered in some cycling tours by tour operator and travel agencies
- Section 6 Jezersko – Völkermarkt: offered in a few road cycling tours by tour operators and travel agencies

*Target Group:***EuroVelo (2012):**

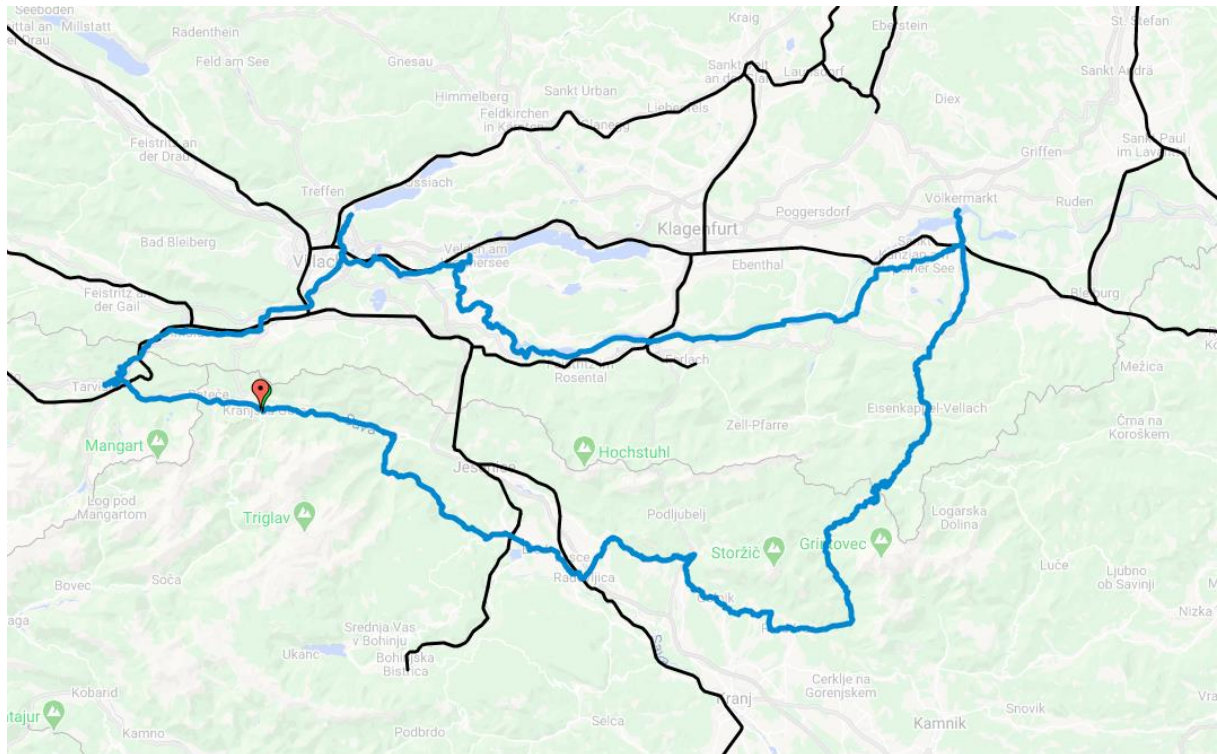
- Age between 45–55 years
- 60 % man, 40 % women
- On average they have higher education and income
- 20 % cycle on their own, 50 % in pairs, 20 % in smaller groups between 3 and 5 people
- 30% are doing 2-4 stages, 30% 5 to 7 stages, 32% 8-14 stages, 8% more than 15 stages
- Motivation factors are: sport activity, closeness to nature, flexibility, health, escape from everyday life, gaining new information, learning about the country & people, rest and relaxation, cultural heritage, cycling holidays as an experience, environmentally friendly holiday, exercise, adventure
- The most important features of long-distance cycling routes are: low traffic, good signage, route diversity, quality of cycling pads, bike friendly accommodations, food & beverage, specialized cycling maps, accessibility by public transport, dense cycling network, resting areas and bike shops
- The most important determination factors for choosing a cycling destination are: quality cycling infrastructure, quality of tourist offer (lodging, catering, luggage carriers, etc.), quality of additional offer, quality of communication and marketing activities, diversity of the natural environment, feeling of being organized and secure, cycling culture and lifestyle in the destination.

Drava cycling route (2015):

- average duration of stay: 5 days
- mainly from Germany, Netherlands, Austria, in August also from Italy
- average spending per person per day: 88 € with accommodation, 25 € without accommodation

Alternative routes:

There can also be alternative / shorter route variations in the Karavanke area, since the area is well covered by railway (black line in the picture below) which present an alternative mean of transportation along the route – quickly and relatively easily. The Austrian part side of the route is especially well covered by the railway (as seen on the picture below). These railway connections are already used for such purposes on Drava cycling route.

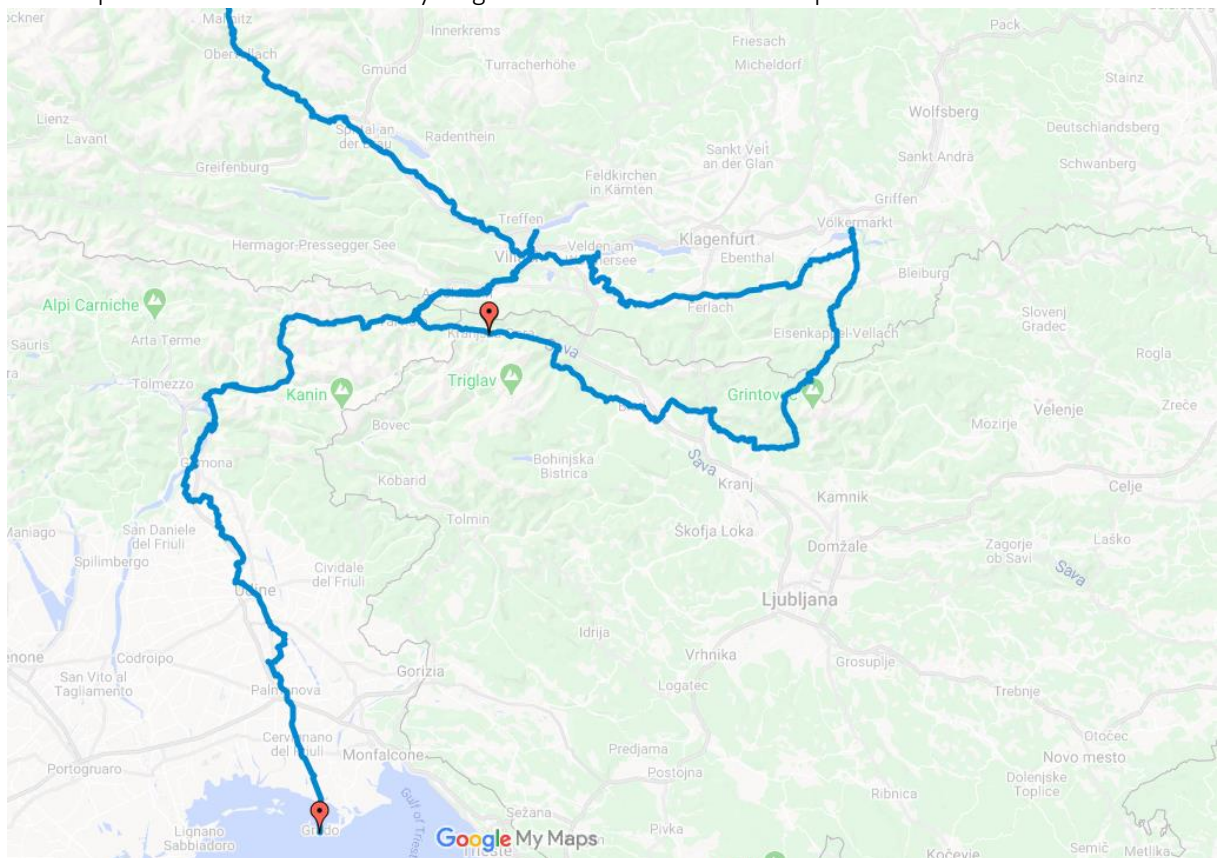


Blue line – Around Karavanke Lakes

Black line – railway

Route extension:

Picture presents Karavanke Lakes cycling tour in combination with Alpe Adria Ciclovía route.



The term Alpe Adria, which stands for a southern lifestyle and the action radius & living environment of Slovenia, Italy and Austria, is used frequently in the connection of cycling (as opposed to hiking).

Alpe Adria = cycling. The online analysis (category travel) confirms this perception. Looking at similar searches, cycling tourism is the common denominator. Despite the Alpe Adria Trail, hiking doesn't really come up as a subject. It is also noticeable that e-bikes are a relevant search topic on the Internet. This should be taken into account for future routes and products.

alpe adria		Weltweit, Letzte 5 Jahre, Reisen	
Verwandte Themen ?	Zunehmend ▾	Ähnliche Suchanfragen ?	Zunehmend ▾
1 Lignano Sabbiadoro - Ort in Italien	Ausreißer	1 alpe adria radweg route	Ausreißer
2 Villach - Stadt in Österreich	Ausreißer	2 alpen adria radweg	Ausreißer
3 Etappenrennen - Thema	Ausreißer	3 alpe adria radweg unterkünfte	Ausreißer
4 Elektrofahrrad - Thema	Ausreißer	4 fc alpe adria	Ausreißer
5 Slowenien - Land, Balkanhalbinsel	Ausreißer	5 alpe adria radweg e bike	Ausreißer
< 1–5 von 25 Themen werden angezeigt >		< 1–5 von 9 Suchanfragen werden angezeigt >	

(Google web search, worldwide, category travel, last 5 years)

One reason for this is the Ciclovía Alpe Adria cycling route, which was already described above. The border to Italy is crossed at Arnoldstein, and from there the route continues all the way to Grado at the Adriatic Sea. It might be strategically interesting to link the route to the Karavanke region, using Arnoldstein as a hub. This could be the way to extend Around Karavanke Lakes towards Salzburg or Adriatic Sea.

Suppliers along the route:

- Austrian part of the route correlates with the Drava cycling route. Service providers along the Drava cycling route are connected into a cluster “Drauradweg Wirte”. The cluster includes accommodations, culinary offer, repair services, bicycle rental stations and cycling tour operators. Their goal is joint marketing, quality management / quality assurance and exchange of experiences. We can conclude that there are plenty of quality suppliers along the Austrian part of the route.
- The Italian part is short and there are plenty of tourism providers along this section of the route, especially around Tarvisio.
- We can divide the Slovenian section into two parts. The first one represents the area between Rateče and Radovljica, which is well developed with many suppliers. The section between Radovljica to Jezersko is less developed with fewer suppliers. In Slovenia, GlZ Slovenia Outdoor manages the certification system for bike-friendly accommodations. Some of certified accommodations are situated along the route.

Current management:

- For the Austrian part (Drava cycling route), Kärnten Werbung is responsible for marketing, regional government for infrastructure;
- For the Slovenian part, no one is responsible for marketing since there is no product behind, Direkcija za infrastrukturo is responsible for infrastructure.

Story:

- Route around Karavanke mountain range;
- Connects well-recognized tourist areas with lakes as the main attractions: Bled, Wolkemarker Strausee, Wörther See and Ossiacher See. Lakes are not as picturesque without the view of the Karavanke mountain range.
- The area is well connected by highway and railway which can be used as a shuttle system;
- Historically well-connected area which was a part of the same country for centuries (similar architecture, habits, culture etc);
- Drava cycling route and Alpe Adria Ciclovía as two well-known long-distance cycling routes.

Important information

- Long-distance cycling routes are the main veins of each cycling destination;
- Cycling guests on long-distance cycling paths are the first guests = ambassadors;
- They are the best marketing tool for a destination and for local cycling routes;
- Each destination in the Karavanke region should develop its own cycling loops (network) to attract attention and keep bikers in destination longer;
- Each destination should offer cycling guests information about local loops/network (accommodations, resting areas etc);
- Loops should be categorized according to their difficulty, character, target group etc;
- There should be one web communication platform of all cycling paths (GPX, pictures, charts etc);

What is missing:

We can sum up that infrastructure in terms of dedicated cycling route is already there with only missing part from Bled to Jezersko and connection to Völkermarkt. This missing section of dedicated cycling route represent only 28 % of all the route and it is possible to avoid it by train.

Sections of the route also already have well-established management systems, since most of the Austrian part is presented by the Drava cycling route, small part of the Italian part follows the Alpe Adria Ciclovía route, and most of the Slovenian part runs on an excellent dedicated cycling route. It can be concluded that there should not be any problems with the management of the route.

Additionally, most sections have well-established marketing and sales channels, especially the Austrian part with Drava cycling route where Kärnten Werbung is responsible for it and the Slovenian side where Kranjska Gora Tourist Board presents one of the best organized DMOs in Slovenia. There are already two potential candidates for future partners responsible for marketing and sales of the new long-distance cycling route around Karavanke.

Supply chain with specialized accommodations and other services necessary for successful long-distance cycling route is already established on the Austrian side with Drauradweg Wirte. Slovenian side also has well-established specialized offer, especially between Kranjska Gora and Bled/Radovljica. In Slovenia, a cycling product association operates on a national level. The Slovenia Outdoor association is promoting and educating their members in terms of being bike-friendly. To sum up, there are already well-established associations on both sides of the border. The offer of both countries just needs to be connected.

The target group is already well defined above. The target market can also be defined easily since Drava cycling route mostly targets Austrian, South German and North Italian market. The analysis shows similar results, as most foreign visitors coming to the six Slovenian municipalities come from Italy, Germany, Benelux and the UK.

Table: Operational objectives and actions

Operational objectives	Actions
A.1 Management	A.1.1 Identification and connection of all stakeholders A.1.2 Determination of the budget A.1.2 Determination of the action plan
A.2 Infrastructure	A.2.1 Determination of the route A.2.2 Signposting A.2.3 Identification of problematic sections in terms of the infrastructure and estimation of necessary investments
A.3 Product development	A.3.1 Educational events for all stakeholders A.3.2 Creation of supply chain A.3.3 Specialization A.3.4 Booking centre A.3.5 Packaging
A.4 Marketing and sales	A.4.1 Marketing strategy A.4.2 Pricing

A.1 Management

Table: Actions inside operational objective A.1 management

Operational objective A.1 Management	
Quick overview	An idea of having a circular long-distance cycling route around Karavanke mountain range is still on the conceptual level, meaning further development in all aspects is needed. This route connects famous lakes Bled, Wolkeltmarker Strausee, Wörther See and Ossiacher See, which are located around Karavanke mountain range. While cycling around the lakes, cyclists will be able to enjoy the views of the Karavanke. To successfully implement this idea in reality, some resources need to be provided. The project partners already confirmed this cycling product as the cycling backbone of the cross-border area.
Action A.1.1	Identification and connection of all stakeholders The first step should be to identify all relevant stakeholders involved in the development, management and marketing of the product. Stakeholders from private (accommodations, travel agencies and tour operators, shuttle services, bike shops etc.) and public sector (municipalities, DMOs, public transportation etc.) should be identified. Once they are identified, the most important and most interested in the project should be connected.
Timing:	2020
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) Carnica Regional Management annual management funds
Action A.1.2	Determination of the budget Once key stakeholders are determined the budget must be determined to provide the needed resources for further development of the cycling route. To do that, all potential costs must be identified. Resources can be found internally on municipal, regional or national level or in different international projects.
Timing:	2020

Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds
Action A.1.3	<p>Determination of the action plan</p> <p>After the key stakeholders and the budget are identified, an action plan of the project must be prepared. In the action plan all further steps need to be determined and budgeted. The carrier of the activity must be identified. Once the action plan is prepared, the implementation of the project can start.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds • Alternative: Integration of the Action Plan to one of related parallel projects run by BSC Kranj or another stakeholder (e.g. sustainable mobility, regional cycle network, climate change ...)

A.2 Infrastructure

Table: Actions inside operational objective A.2 infrastructure

Operational objective A.2 Infrastructure	
Quick overview	The infrastructure is always one of the, if not the most important determination factor while choosing the next cycling holidays. The Drava Cycling Route was certified with 5 stars out of 5 according to the ADFC criteria due to its regulated trail, safety and accessibility. The Italian part of the route and a large section of the Slovenian potential route are well developed in terms of dedicated cycling infrastructure. The conclusion is that the new circular route will be attractive for potential guests in terms of infrastructure.
Action A.2.1	<p>Determination of the route</p> <p>The route presented in above was created on the conceptual level without reviewing it in the field and without discussing it with potential partners. The route was created mostly on existing cycling dedicated routes with few missing parts from Bled or Radovljica to Völkermarkt. In the next steps all sections need to be checked in the field and discussed with all important stakeholders.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<p>Process management and coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds <p>Technical verification:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal budgets - each municipality along the route for its part • Budget of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Transport – Directorate for Roads • Budget of the Government of Carinthia or Cycling track management authority
Action A.2.2	<p>Signposting</p> <p>Once the route is determined, signposting must be agreed on. The route must be signposted everywhere in the same way. Each country has its own laws for signposting and these laws must be checked and followed. Drava cycling route already passes the same three countries and can as such serve as a good practice example. The positive thing about the signposting is also the fact that most of the</p>

	route is already signposted with different labels (Drava cycling Route, Alpe Adria Ciclovía...), therefore only additional labelling is needed.
Timing:	2023
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERREG VI-A Austria Slovenia 2021-2027 (topic to be programmed in the Cooperation programme which is under preparation in 2020) • Alternative: • LAG EU funds for rural development, separately for Gorenjska and Carinthia (topic needs to be planned and integrated in both LAG local strategies 2021-2027 – already in 2020)
Action A.2.3	<p>Identification of problematic sections in terms of the infrastructure and estimation of necessary investments</p> <p>As already mentioned, the only problematic section from the infrastructural stand point is the section between Bled/Radovoljica and Völkermark. On this section, there is no dedicated cycling route and, in some parts, especially from Jezersko to Eisenkappel, the only possible route is the main road which can be busy during the main season. This is also the section where the terrain is steep and cyclists need to gain many elevation meters. These section needs to be reviewed and sorted into short- and long-term solutions/investments.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<p>Process management and coordination:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) • Carnica Regional Management annual management funds <p>Technical design and bill of quantities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal budgets - each municipality along the route for its part • Budget of the Republic of Slovenia, Ministry of Transport – Directorate for Roads • Budget of the Government of Carinthia or Cycling track management authority <p>Implementation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERREG V Austria Slovenia 2021-2027 • In Slovenia: • Cohesion policy 2021-2027: ERDF (provided that cycling trails will be eligible for funding after 2020) • Slovenia Climate Fund • EKO Fund Slovenia • Federal Ministry of Agriculture, Regions and Tourism, Austria - #Mission 2030 'Offensive for -mobility' (provided that the programme runs after 2020)

A.3 Product development

Table: Actions inside operational objective A.3 Product development

Operational objective A.3 Product development	
Quick overview	After the infrastructure and management of the route are checked, product development starts. Its means identification of all necessary businesses along the route (accommodations, shuttle service, bike & repair shops etc.), linking them into an effective supply chain, organizing educational events which also serve as networking events for all involved stakeholders, standardization of the offer – specialization, discussing and determining price policy and if necessary, establishing a booking centre.
Action A.3.1	Educational events for all stakeholders

	To create a great product, all involved stakeholders must be included. Many networking events must be organized to make sure businesses and local people along the route accept the product and see it as their own. Once it is embraced by all, the product becomes successful. Events must be educational, so that all involved service providers understand what the product is, who are the guests, what are their needs etc. Events are also the best tool for networking for all stakeholders. It is much easier to connect all involved parties if they know each other in person and trust each other.
Timing:	2021
Action A.3.2	<p>Creation of supply chain</p> <p>Each successful product must have an effective supply chain of all involved stakeholders. Without an effective supply chain long distance hiking or biking products cannot work, since travellers are changing locations every day. The logistics must be well organized. There are already few successful case studies like Alpe Adria Trail, Trans Slovenia, Drava cycling route etc.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<p>At overall product development level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERREG VI-A Austria Slovenia 2021-2027 (topic to be programmed in the Cooperation programme which is under preparation in 2020) <p>Alternative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAG EU funds for rural development, separately for Gorenjska and Carinthia (topic needs to be planned and integrated in both LAG local strategies 2021-2027 – already in 2020) • Other INTERREG programmes such as CENTRAL EUROPE, DANUBE, ALPINE SPACE (provided that the topic complies with or is adjusted to the programme aims) <p>At micro business level:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special micro loans and micro vouchers for SMEs available locally (KWF in Carinthia and SPS in Slovenia) • Municipal subsidies for micro investments in tourism in Slovenia
Action A.3.3	<p>Specialization</p> <p>The supply chain must be well connected and all (as many as possible) stakeholders must be standardized in terms of bike-friendly specialization. Travellers bike around for a few days and normally change accommodations and other services every day. Cyclists expect certain level of specialization in terms of bike friendly accommodations, shuttles with “bike friendly trailer”, bike & repair shops at the end/beginning of stages etc. All successful long-distance cycling routes follow this pattern. Good practices of bike friendly accommodations can be found in Slovenia.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	Same as above action A3.2. (should be integrated part of the same project)
Action A.3.4	<p>Booking centre</p> <p>If the decision is made that the product will be offered in the market, its brand name will be protected and it will only be offered by one or two partners (if two it means the Slovenian part is offered by a Slovenian partner and the Austrian part is offered by an Austrian partner), a booking centre must be created. Booking centre should have its own pricing policy, partner structure etc. The role of a booking centre can</p>

	<p>be played by a public institution like in the case of Alpe Adria Trail (DMO Soča Valley) or by a private company.</p> <p>The product can also be offered openly so that all companies (tour operators, travel agencies or DMOs) can offer it to their customers on B2B or B2C level.</p> <p>There can also be a middle way where companies that are offering the product on the market and use protected brand name must give something in return or/and must comply with some quality standards.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<p>For setting up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above action A3.2. (should be integrated part of the same project) <p>For operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking fees in case of a private business model • Municipal budgets (tourism tax) and booking fees in case of a public business model
Action A.3.5	<p>Packaging</p> <p>When product and supply chain with partners is defined, packaging can start. With different packages you can target different target groups and tailor the product according to the market needs. The reality shows that packaging is an ongoing process that never stops, since the needs of the market are changing. As we can see from the statistics above, the average stay in the destination is decreasing and short breaks are becoming more popular. On the other hand, there are more and more long-distance cyclists who spend over 14 days on a bike, discovering destinations around the route.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<p>For setting up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above action A3.2. (should be integrated part of the same project) <p>For operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales income

A.4 Marketing and sales

Table: Actions inside operational objective A.4 Marketing and sales

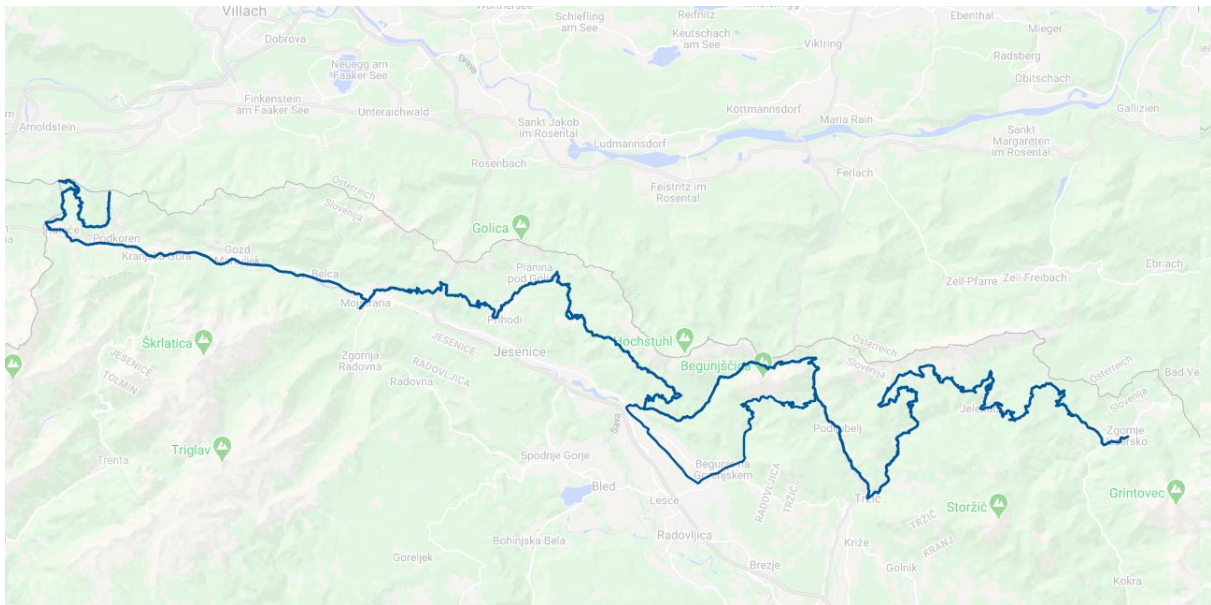
Operational objective A.4 Marketing and sales	
Quick overview	Once management structure with budget is ready, infrastructure is established, route is marked, supply chain is created and the product is ready to be put on the market, a marketing plan needs to be prepared. The target group was already identified briefly, but for successful marketing and sales further investigation and decisions must be accepted.
Action A.4.1	<p>Marketing strategy</p> <p>To use financial resources for marketing and sales as efficient as possible marketing strategy must be prepared. In the marketing strategy goal, vision, positioning, definition of the target group, internal and external communication, B2B and B2C communication etc must be defined together with short term action plan. Once all this is done the actual marketing and sales can start Good marketing strategy on long terms maximize the benefits of marketing.</p>
Timing:	2022

Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • INTERREG VI-A Austria Slovenia 2021-2027 (topic to be programmed in the Cooperation programme which is under preparation in 2020) <p>Alternative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • LAG EU funds for rural development, separately for Gorenjska and Carinthia (topic needs to be planned and integrated in both LAG local strategies 2021-2027 – already in 2020) • Municipal budgets (tourism tax) • Commercial partners in case of a privately managed business model
Action A.4.2	<p>Pricing</p> <p>If the brand name of the product will be protected at least on EU level, then it will be possible to control its sales. Good example is the Alpe Adria Trail, where the Slovenian part of the trail is offered by the DMO Soča Valley. In this case the pricing must be determined in terms of B2B and B2C sales.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on selected business model • Most probably part of commercial operation

B.2 Development of the biking product TRANS KARAVANKE MTB TRAIL

The route:

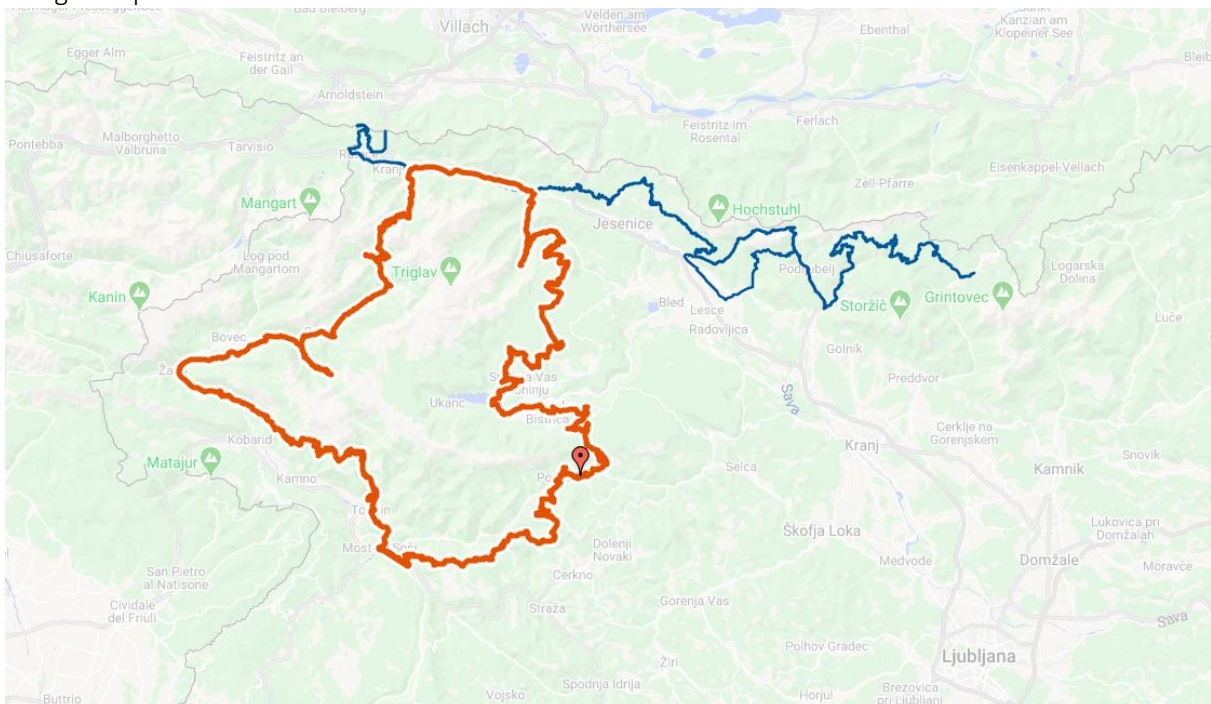
Connects the Western part of Karavanke with the Eastern part. It follows the Slovenian side along the entire route, since the placement of the route (legalization) into the area is more difficult on the Austrian side compared to Slovenian side.



Route Extension

The Trans Karavanke route can nicely connect with the Julian Alps route running around the Triglav National Park.

Google maps:



All the cycling routes, mountain huts etc. can be viewed on Google maps document:
<https://tinyurl.com/karavanke-biking>

The stages:

In total km: 135 km

In total elevation m: 5700 m

- Stage 1: Medvodje – Dom na Kofcah: 14 km, 850 m
- Stage 2: Dom na Kofcah – Planinski dom na Zelenici: 27 km, 1.150 m
- Stage 3: Planinski dom na Zelenici – Valvasorjev dom: 16 km, 750 m
- Stage 4: Valvasorjev dom – Mojstrana: 28 km, 1.150 m
- Stage 5: Mojstrana – Korensko sedlo: 34 km, 1.050 m

Alternative stages:

- Stage 1: Kranjska Gora – Bovec
- Stage 2: Bovec – Tolmin
- Stage 3: Tolmin – Bohinjska Bistrica
- Stage 4: Bohinjska Bistrica – Mojstrana
- Stage 5: Mojstrana – Valvasorjev dom
- Stage 6: Valvasorjev dom – Planinski dom na Zelenici
- Stage 7: Planinski dom na Zelenici – Dom na Kofcah
- Stage 8: Dom na Kofcah – Medvodje

The alternative route includes eight days of cycling. It can be targeted to foreigners from distant markets. It enables cyclists to avoid the asphalt road from Kranjska Gora to Mojstrana, which is not interesting for mountain bikers who are the target group of the product.

Infrastructure:

Most of the route runs on forest roads. Over 25 % of the surface is presented by gravel roads. Some shorter sections run on paths or trails. Most of the route is easy rideable with few steep sections. The Trans Karavanke can be completed in two directions, while West to East is a bit easier with fewer ascents. The entire route has permits of the landowners or by responsible institutions.

Maintenance and marking:

Alpine Association of Slovenia is the manager of the route and local alpine associations are responsible for the maintenance and marking of the route.

Marketing and sales:

At the moment Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible for booking.

Target Group:

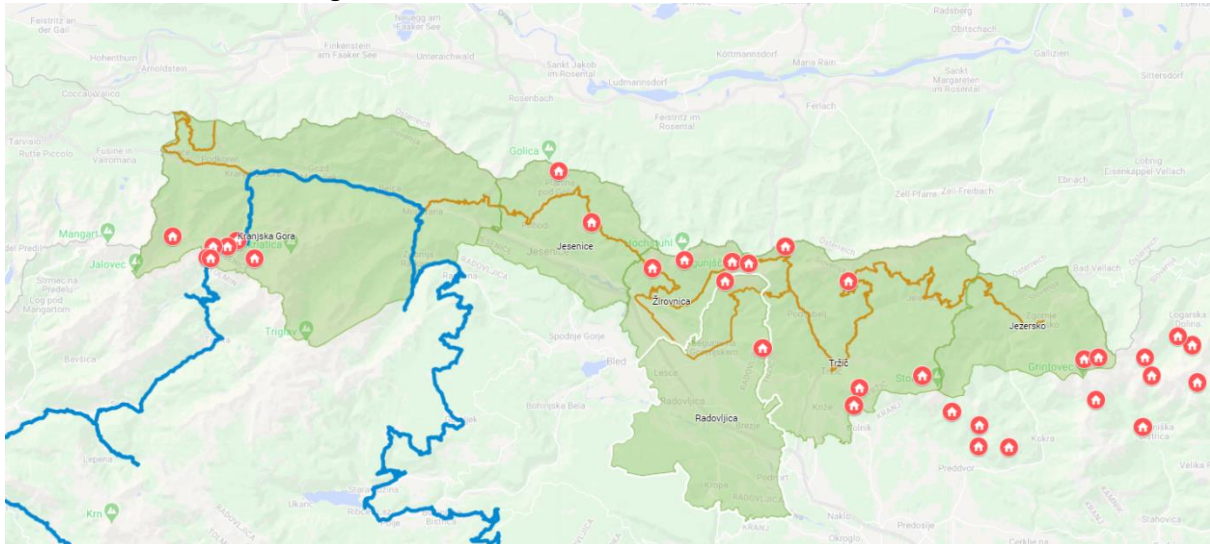
Bike Magazine (2015)

- 66 % are men, average age is 37,5 years
- On average they spend over 800 EUR per week on cycling holidays
- 75 % are staying in hotels and pensions, 18 % in specialized cycling accommodations
- 93 % of those staying in hotels and pensions would like to have 3-4* service
- Average cycling holidays last one week and a half
- Every year over 160.000 German speaking cyclists are going on Trans tours
- Just in Germany, there are over 3.500.000 mountain bikers cycle at least once a week

Suppliers along the route:

The product is designed to connect mountain huts along the route. Accommodation and food is available at the beginning and at the end of each stage. In some places such as Zgornje Jezersko (beginning) and Mojstrana, there are other suppliers available as well. In between, some bike shops (Jesenice, Tržič, Kranjska Gora), shuttle services, bike rental places etc. can also be found.

The picture bellow shows the Trans Karavanke route in brown, the Julian Alps loop in blue, and the mountain huts located along the Trans Karavanke route.



Current management:

At the moment Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible the development, marking and maintenance of the route.

Story:

- The route is made for serious mountain bikers that are physically well prepared;
- It is connecting some of the highest and best developed hiking huts in Slovenia;
- It is connecting places where there are not many tourists so bikers are welcome;
- From most of the places there are nice views towards the Austrian and Slovenian Lakes, to Mount Triglav and the Julian Alps;
- Slovenian part of the Karavanke mountain range presents the sunny side of the Karavanke, meaning that the product can be offered from early spring late Autumn
- It is a sustainable product since it connects hiking huts and cyclists have to carry everything with them. Cyclists buy local food and drink – are slowly and hungry;

What is missing:

The Trans Karavanke route connects the Western and Eastern part of the Karavanke mountain range. The backbone of the route is already determined by the partners of the project. The product is a compromise between what partners wanted and what is possible. The route runs only on the Slovenian side, since in Austria there are many legal obstacles. The compromises had to be done already on Slovenian side because of two reasons. There are to limitation factors – the first one is the Slovenian legislation that limits some better options of the route and the second one is the land ownership. The route is developed, while further developments need to be done in the future with the vision of improving guest's satisfaction.

The route is already uniformly marked. Few shorter sections will be finished by the end of the spring 2020. There was an agreement among partners that local alpine associations are responsible for further maintaining and marking of the route. Maintaining and marking should be connected with holistic management of the route. There needs to be a connection between sales and maintenance. There were already some discussions among the partners who should be responsible for selling the product. One of the options is the DMO Julian Alps, which is doing the sales of the Julian Alps loop. The latter was created by the Alpine Association of Slovenia. The route is presented in above as the "Alternative route". Julian Alps loop can be nicely connected to the Trans Karavanke route.

The route is already uniformly marked. Few shorter sections will be finished by the end of the spring 2020. There was an agreement among partners that local alpine associations are responsible for further maintaining and marking of the route. Maintaining and marking should be connected with holistic management of the route. There needs to be a connection between sales and maintenance. At the moment Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible for marketing and sales but there are already some discussions who will take over this service. One of the options is the DMO Julian Alps, which is doing the sales of the Julian Alps loop. The route is presented in above as the "Alternative route". Julian Alps loop can be nicely connected to the Trans Karavanke route.

Supply chain along the route is already defined. Most accommodations are mountain huts owned by Alpine Association of Slovenia. In the future, the supply chain must be diversified as some guests expect accommodations at a higher level. In addition, most of the mountain huts do not have a booking system, which makes it impossible to offer the product successfully on the market. Next question that needs to be addressed is also the specialization of accommodations and other services in terms of being bike friendly.

Table: Operational objectives and actions

Operational objectives	Actions
B.1 Management	B.1.1 Determination of the management structure B.1.2 Determination of the budget B.1.3 Determination of the action plan
B.2 Infrastructure	B.2.1 Plans for improvements B.2.2 Maintaining
B.3 Product development	B.3.1 Educational events for all stakeholders B.3.2 Diversification and broadening supply chain B.3.3 Specialization B.3.4 Booking centre B.3.5 Packaging
B.4 Marketing and sales	B.4.1 Marketing strategy B.4.2 Pricing

B.1 Management

Table: Actions inside operational objective B.1 management

Operational objective B.1 Management	
Quick overview	Trans Karavanke already exist as a route but not yet as a product. The backbone of the infrastructure is already there, but all the rest is missing. The roles considering the infrastructure are already determined, while the roles for all other aspects of the product must yet be determined together with the partner structure and

	partnership agreement. For further development, a certain budget must be insured to prepare the action plan and its realization.
Action B.1.1	<p>Determination of Management structure</p> <p>Partners of the project agreed that the Alpine association of Slovenia together with the local Alpine association clubs will be responsible for the route maintenance. Management structure needs to be developed, where all the tasks would be identified and assigned to certain partners with correlations between. For instance, the local alpine association is responsible for maintenance of a certain route section and for this service it receives a certain fee from the partner who is responsible for the booking centre. The main tasks are maintenance, developing the product and its infrastructure, marketing and sales.</p>
Timing:	2020
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget)
Action B.1.2	<p>Determination of budget</p> <p>During the project, a backbone of the product was created. For successful placement of the product in the market, a certain budget needs to be provided. Without further investments the product will not be sustainable and it will not be successful on the market. There are already too many well-developed similar products like the Julian Alps loop, Trans Slovenia and other Trans Alps routes around Europe and globally.</p>
Timing:	2020
Potential funding sources:	<p>Municipal budgets (e.g. tourism tax)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Slovenian Tourism Board (to be approached as most of the territory is not part of the so called 'leading destinations' which have access to certain marketing budget from STB)
Action B.1.3	<p>Determination of the action plan</p> <p>Since the backbone of the product is already established and most of the partners are already identified, action plan should focus mostly on further development of the product, marketing and sales.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> RDA Gorenjska regular annual management funds (municipal and/or national budget) <p>Alternative:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integration of the Action Plan in one of related parallel projects run by BSC Kranj or other stakeholder (e.g. sustainable mobility, regional cycle network, climate change ...)

B.2 Infrastructure

Table: Actions inside operational objective B.2 infrastructure

Operational objective B.2 Infrastructure	
Quick overview	<p>The route is known and has all the necessary permits from institutions and landowners. The route itself is a compromise between what is possible and what was the initial desire of the partners. The main problem was the Austrian legislation and it is the main reason why the route only includes the Slovenian part of Karavanke. This will be the case also in the future. On the Slovenian side the main two limitations were legal issues and landownership. In Slovenia with time and further development</p>

	<p>some changes will be possible as changing legislation and convincing landowners for permits need is time consuming.</p> <p>Signposting of the route was already done. Only a few sections are missing and will be finished until the end of the spring.</p>
Action B.2.1	<p>Plans for improvements</p> <p>As mentioned in the quick overview, on Slovenian side improvements can be done in the future. In the last years some legislation regarding cycling in nature has changed and this trend is expected to continue. This will help further development of the product. By improving the infrastructure, we improve biker's satisfaction. The same is true for landowners, where time and money are needed to improve some sections. Some of the already included sections need further investments so that the experience of the bikers will improve. In the future, necessary improvements of the route must be identified, new versions of stages should be established and possible connections with other similar products should be established (Julian Alps loop, Trans Slovenia etc.).</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal budgets • INTERREG V Austria Slovenia 2021-2027 • LAG EU funds for rural development for Gorenjska • Sport Foundation of Slovenia/ Fundacija za šport
Action B.2.2	<p>Maintaining</p> <p>Alpine association of Slovenia is the manager and local alpine clubs are the guardian of the route and will be responsible for the maintenance of the route, especially signposting. Most of the time the route is following roads that are maintained by local and national government. There needs to be some kind of plan of who will be responsible for regular checking of the route, especially the remote parts and reporting to the institutions responsible for it. Some type of compensation for maintenance and checking needs to be provided in the future.</p>
Timing:	2022
Cost estimation:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Users / Booking fees • Municipal budgets (tourism tax)

B.3 Product development

Table: Actions inside operational objective B.3 Product development

Operational objective B.3 Product development	
Quick overview	<p>Most of the fragments are already in place, while some important pieces are still missing. Well established products need to have connected, informed and specialized stakeholders, well established supply chain with prepared possibilities for different needs of clients, tour operator or travel agency who can legally offer well prepared products on the market and prepare tailor made tours.</p>
Action B.3.1	<p>Educational events for all stakeholders</p> <p>To create great product all stakeholders must be actively involved. Many networking events must be organized so that businesses and local people around the route accept the product and see it as their own. Once it is embraced by stakeholders on different levels, the product becomes successful. Events must be educational so that all involved services understand what the product is, who are the guests, what are their needs etc. Such events are also the best tool for networking of stakeholders. It</p>

	is much easier to connect all involved parties if they know each other and trust each other.
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participant Fees • Municipal budgets (e.g. tourism tax) • Slovenian Tourism Board (to be approached as most of the territory is not part of the so called 'leading destinations' which have access to certain marketing budget from STB) • LAG EU funds for rural development for Gorenjska • Alternative: Erasmus+ Sport Programme
Action B.3.2	<p>Diversification and broadening supply chain</p> <p>The product mainly includes mountain huts, while some cyclist, especially from German speaking market, expect service of higher quality. They are willing to sleep a day or two in mountain hut but after that, they expect a 3-4* level of accommodation. For future development of the product, new varieties of stages must be prepared to enable more accommodation options. Ideally at least every second stage should end in a valley where clients have more options. As the present product mostly uses mountain huts, which are not easily accessible, the luggage transfer between the stages is difficult as well.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking fees in case of a private business model • Municipal budgets (tourism tax) and booking fee in case of a public business model
Action B.3.3	<p>Specialization</p> <p>The supply chain must be well connected and all (as many as possible) stakeholders must be standardized in terms of specialization for bike friendly providers. Cyclists expect certain level of specialization in terms of bike friendly accommodations, shuttles with "bike friendly trailer", bike & repair shops at the end/beginning of stages etc. Good practices of bike friendly accommodations can be found in Slovenia.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	Same as above B.3.2.
Action B.3.4	<p>Booking centre</p> <p>The only way to control the sales of the product is to protect its brand name at least on the EU level. There were already some discussions about who should be responsible for booking of this product in the future. Now Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible. The DMO Julian Alps showed some interest. They are willing to offer it together with the Julian Alps loop. If this option will be chosen there must be an agreement made between the DMO Julian Alps and the local alpine associations who are responsible for the maintenance, about how the profit will be split. The product can also be offered to other tour operators or travel agencies, but a certain agreement about the budget for marketing and sharing the profit must be agreed in advance.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovenian Tourism Board (to be approached as most of the territory is not part of so called 'leading destinations' which have access to certain marketing budget from STB) • Booking fees in case of a private business model

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Municipal budgets (tourism tax) and booking fee in case of a public business model
Action B.3.5	<p>Packaging</p> <p>When product and supply chain with partners is defined, packaging can start. With different packages different target groups can be targeted and product can be tailored according to market needs. The reality shows that packaging is an ongoing process that never stops as the market needs are changing. As we can see from the statistics above the length of the average stay in the destination is decreasing since short breaks are becoming more popular. Normal length of Trans Alps cycling holiday is about a week. Further extension of the product is necessary if foreign markets will be targeted.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on selected business model • Most probably part of commercial operation

B.4 Marketing and sales

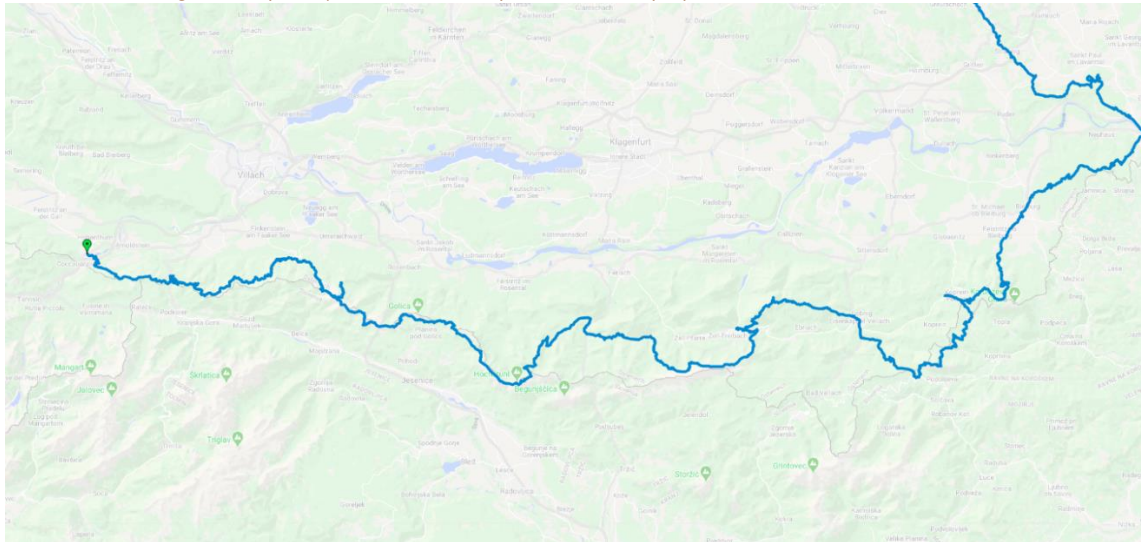
Table: Actions inside operational objective B.4 Marketing and sales

Operational objective B.4 Product development	
Quick overview	Once management structure with budget is ready, infrastructure is established, route is marked, supply chain is created and product is ready for the market, marketing plan needs to be prepared. Target group was already identified briefly, but for successful marketing and sales further investigation and decisions must be accepted.
Action B.4.1	<p>Marketing strategy</p> <p>To use financial resources for marketing and sales as efficient as possible, a marketing strategy must be prepared. Goals, vision, positioning, definition of the target group, internal and external communication, B2B and B2C communication etc. must be defined in the marketing strategy together with short term action plan. Once all this is done, the actual marketing and sales can start.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Slovenian Tourism Board • Municipal budgets (tourism tax) • Private partners
Action A.4.2	<p>Pricing</p> <p>If the brand name of the product will be protected at least on the EU level, then it will be possible to control its sales. Good example is the Alpe Adria Trail where the Slovenian part of the trail is offered by the DMO Soča Valley. In this case, the pricing must be determined in terms of B2B and B2C sales.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on selected business model • Most probably part of commercial operation

B.3 Development of hiking product HIKING IN KARAVANKE MOUNTAIN RANGE

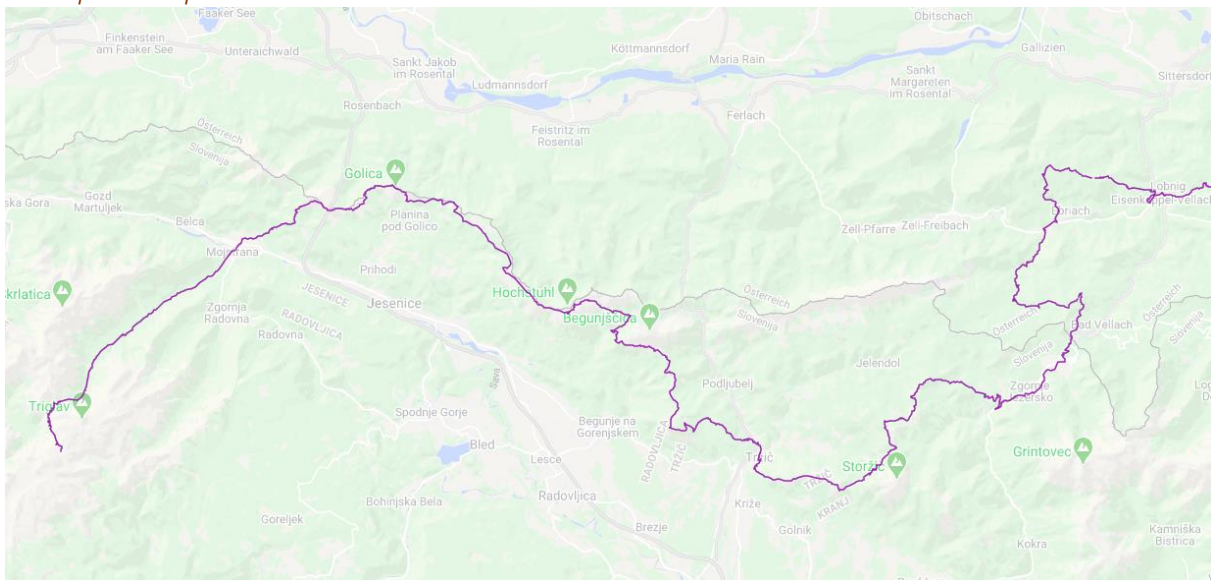
There are 3 main long-distance hiking routes that create the backbone of the hiking product in the Karavanke mountain range: Panoramaweg Südalpen (Panoramska pot Južne Alpe), Via Alpina Purple and The Slovenian Mountain Trail. We will focus on the following in the document below since those 3 passes the entire Karavanke mountain and connects both countries. We cannot avoid mentioning and in the document, below also including Alpe Adria Trail and Juliana Trail since both of them are extremely important long distance hiking trails for the destination. Both of them are also already well developed and functioning product.

Panoramaweg Südalpen (Panoramska pot Južne Alpe)



The route has in total 227 km, 13.500 elevation m and 17 stages. Most of the route is following the Austrian-Slovenian border, mainly staying on the Austrian side.

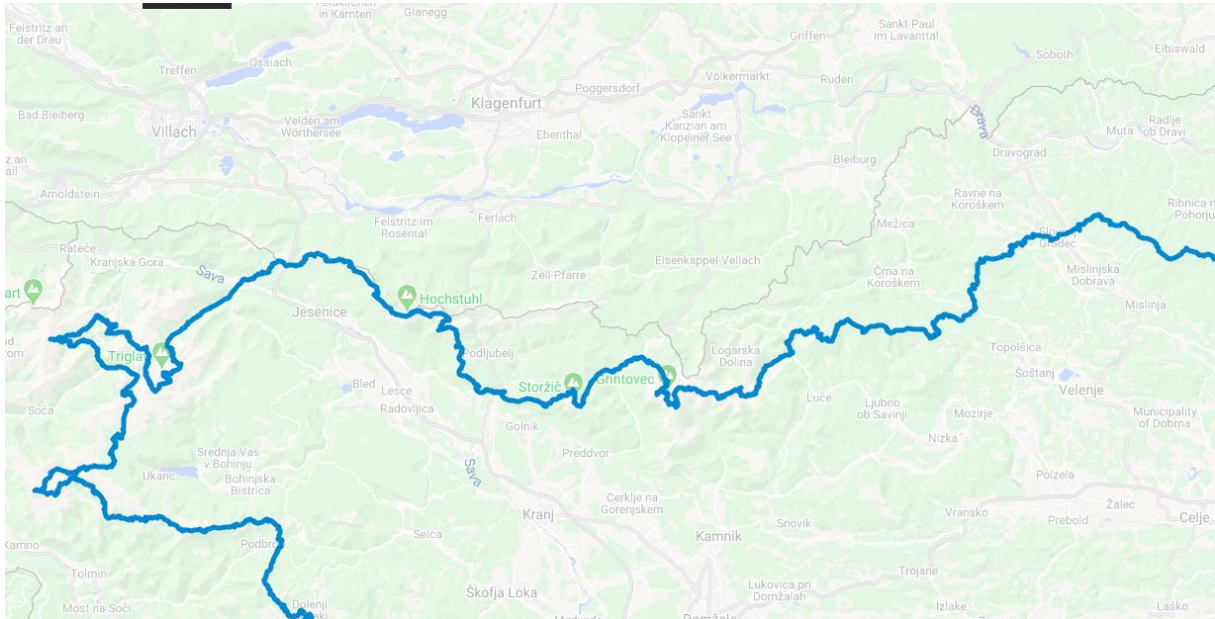
Via Alpina Purple



It has 66 stages and connects Slovenia, Austria and Germany. It starts in the heart of the Triglav National Park, passes Mojstrana and enters into the Karavanke mountain range at Gollnitz Plateau. After that it

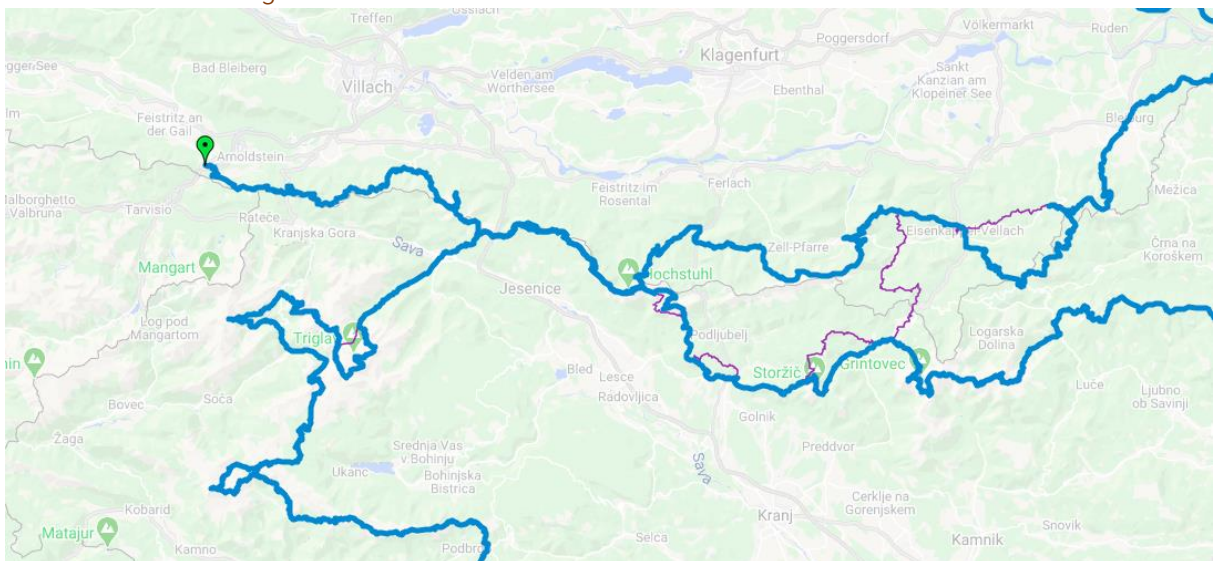
follows the Slovenian – Austrian border till Begunjščica, where it turns deeper into Slovenia and crosses the Slovenian – Austrian border after Zgornje Jezersko.

The Slovenian Mountain Trail (Slovenska planinska pot)



It has 617 km, 37.300 m and 37 stages in total. It starts in Maribor and follows the Slovenian – Austrian border on the Slovenia side till Mojstrana where it turns towards the Adriatic Sea in the South.

The Karavanke hiking backbone



The network of the three long-distance hiking trails includes some overlapping sections. Hikers have quite some options where to start and finish the tour.

All hiking routes together with Via Alpina Purple, The Slovenian Mountain Trail, Panoramaweg Südalpen, and mountain huts, can be viewed on Google maps document: <https://tinyurl.com/karavanke-hiking>

Infrastructure

All three hiking routes are well developed and visited by hikers. Together with all categorized hiking trails, the network of hiking infrastructure is highly intense and can offer numerous connections between all three long distance hiking routes that present the backbone of a hiking product in the Karavanke mountain range.



Blue lines - Panoramaweg Südalpen and The Slovenian Mountain Trail

Purple line - Via Alpina Purple

Red lines – hiking trails

Maintenance and marking

- The Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible for the maintenance and marking of The Slovenian Mountain Trail.
- Outdoor Slovenia is responsible for the maintenance and marking of Via Alpina Purple.
- Alpine association of Karanten is responsible for the maintenance and marking of Panoramaweg Südalpen.

Marketing and sales:

- The Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible for the marketing and sales of The Slovenian Mountain Trail. They are only selling hiking diaries. Since 1991 over 100.000 diaries were sold. Since 1953 over 10.600 hikers completed the trail.
- Outdoor Slovenia is responsible for the marketing and sales of Via Alpina Purple.
- Carnica – Trail Angels are responsible for the marketing and sales of Panoramaweg Südalpen.

Target Group:

According to IMT (2013), Deutsches Wanderinstitut (2011) and Deutscher Wanderverband (2010), hikers in GERMANY can mostly be divided into five different groups:

- senior travellers (27 %),
- singles and couples without children (26 %),
- elderly people (17 %),
- families (17 %) and
- young people (13 %).

Senior travellers include hikers between the age of 50 and 65, while elderly people are the ones over the age of 65. Hiking activities are therefore mostly related to visitors aged 30 to 60. The average age of hikers is 49 years and gender-differences are not remarkable. Among all hikers, hikers with higher education and higher income are overrepresented.

In recent years hiking has been widely adopted by the i.e. "high tech" generation, meaning those whose work is intense, stressful, mostly related to sitting in offices and other indoor spaces in front of a computer. They see hiking as a way to escape their stressful and fast lifestyle and to find inner peace in nature. Modern hikers therefore don't like the hiking "highways." Instead they search for quiet, remote routes. They prefer to hike with their partner or friends more than being a part of an organized guided group. After the tour, they tend to reward themselves with an authentic local meal. Along the routes, hikers prefer to stay in smaller private accommodations with a family atmosphere as this is more important to them than staying in often more comfortable hotels. They prefer to book accommodation on a bed and breakfast basis, rarely with half board and almost never with full board.

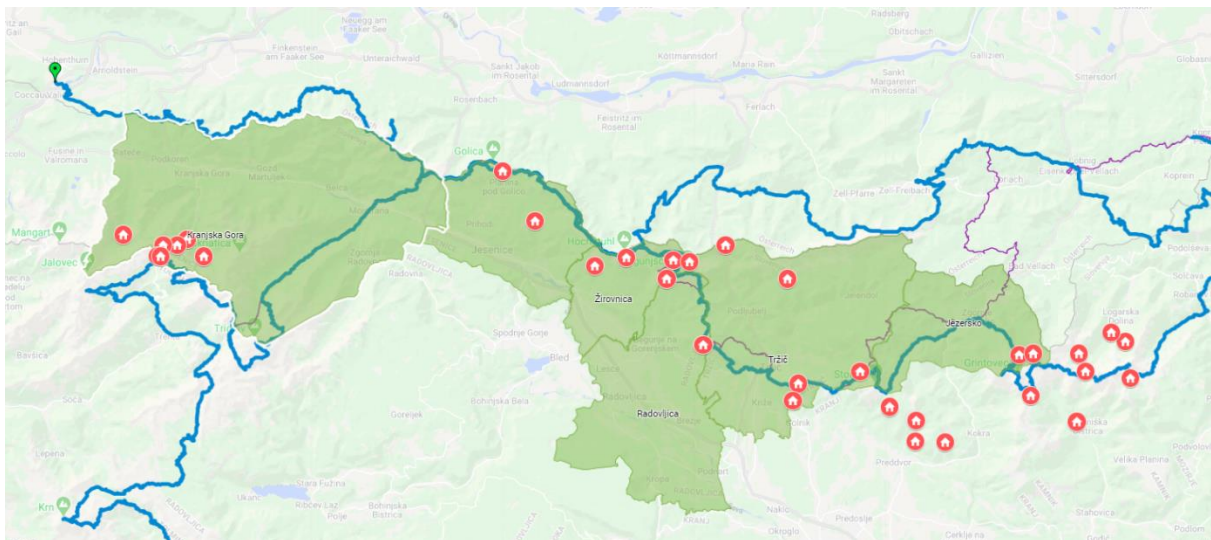
Hiking is not limited to one season (e.g. summer), as hikers like to go outdoors in other seasons as well. In addition, this target group shows above-average loyalty to a visited destination.

In Switzerland, research conducted by Schweiz Tourismus (2019) shows that 85 % of incoming hikers organize their hiking trips by themselves. For hikers in Switzerland, panoramic views, good weather, good signage, well maintained paths, cleanliness, seclusion and good public transport are some of the most important elements for an optimal hiking experience in the Alps. German hikers in particular, claim that unique experiences in the mountains are a priority when visiting Switzerland.

Suppliers along the route:

Each route includes different stakeholders. Along all three routes there are many suppliers, especially mountain huts.

The picture below shows the routes Via Alpina Purple (purple colour), The Slovenian Mountain Trail (lower blue line) and Panoramaweg Südalpen (upper blue line) together with hiking huts on the Slovenian side.

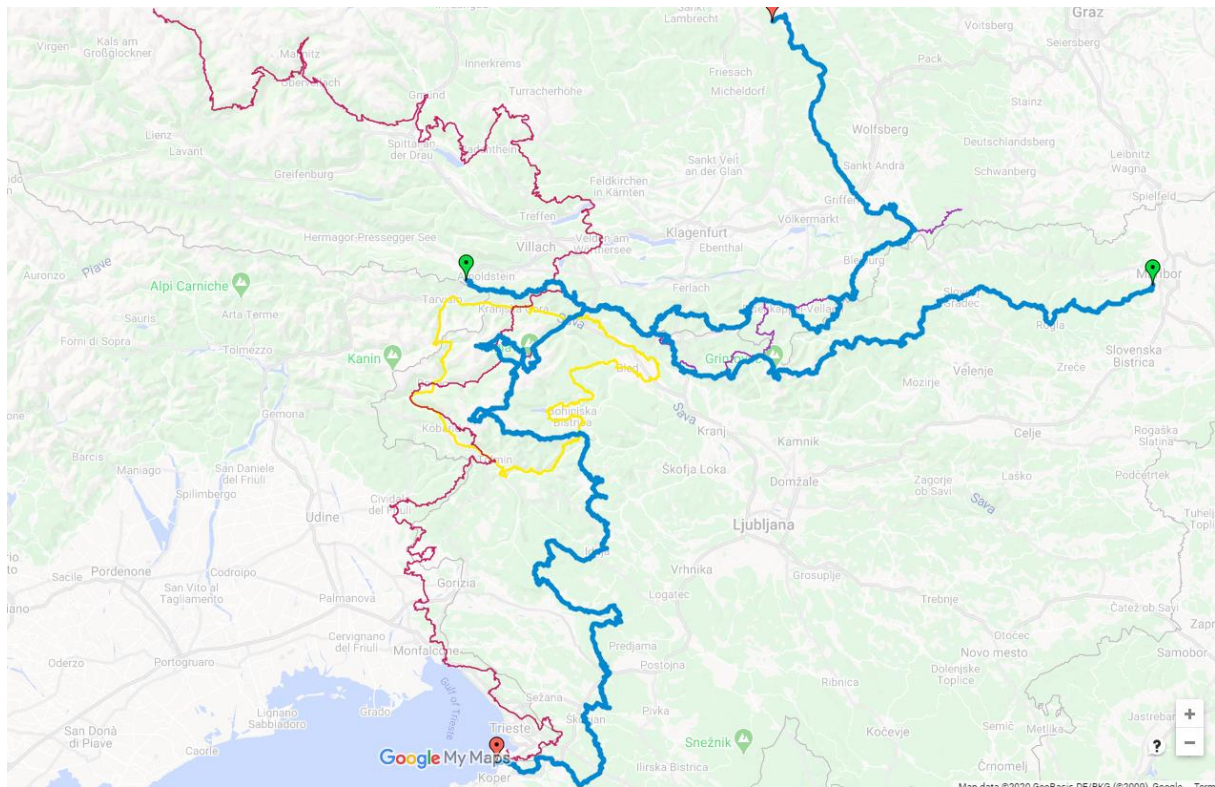


Current management:

- The Alpine Association of Slovenia is responsible for the management of The Slovenian Mountain Trail.
- Outdoor Slovenia is responsible for the management of Via Alpina Purple.
- Alpine association of Karanten is responsible for the management of Panoramaweg Südalpen.

Story:

- The main story of The Slovenian Mountain Trail is to connect the best hiking spots into one trail.
- The main story of Panoramaweg Südalpen is its sunny position and the views of the high peaks in the North and Dinarides in the South.
- The main story of Via Alpina Purple is that it connects the Eastern Limestone Alps, from the Karavanke to the Allgäu.

Route extension:

All routes can be nicely connected with Alpe Adria Trail and Julijana Trail which the first one is marked with red and the second with yellow. Especially Alpe Adria Trail is already well recognized and in 2019, Alpe Adria Trail generated 16,000 guests, who spent 91,200 overnights, and created over 8,000,000 EUR revenue. Juliana was launched in 2020 and was immediately chosen by The Guardian, New York times and National Geographic as one of the TOP things to do in 2020. All those reasons strongly suggest further cooperation and connection.

What is missing:

Karavanke hiking backbone consists of three already well recognized long-distance hike trails, the Slovenian Mountain Trail, Via Alpina Purple and Panoramaweg Südalpen. All three pass Karavanke Mountain range and sometimes overlap between each other.

All three trails are well maintained and marked since local alpine associations take care of them. They are already well recognized, especially The Slovenian Mountain Trail, which was established in 1953. Since then, over 10.600 hikers have already completed the trail.

Till now only Panoramaweg Südalpen works as well-developed product. It is the only one with organized supply chain, in advance prepared stages, programs and booking centre. Via Alpina Purple and The

Slovenian Mountain Trail have well developed infrastructure, while product wise many things are missing. The same is true of marketing. Panoramaweg Südalpen has already well-established marketing, Via Alpina Purple and The Slovenian Mountain Trail are practically without it.

The main question for the future is, if it is possible to connect all three trails in one product or all three need to be developed separately. Since just short sections of all three trails pass the Karavanke mountain range, probably they will have to be addressed separately. The Panoramaweg Südalpen is already a well-developed product, therefore there is no need to prepare objectives and related actions. We will focus on the other two trails.

Table: Operational objectives and actions

Operational objectives	Actions
C.1 Management	C.1.1 Determination of the management structure C.1.2 Determination of the budget C.1.3 Determination of the action plan
C.2 Infrastructure	C.2.1 Plans for improvements C.2.2 Maintaining
C.3 Product development	C.3.1 Educational events for all stakeholders C.3.2 Diversification and broadening supply chain C.3.3 Specialization C.3.4 Booking centre C.3.5 Packaging
C.4 Marketing and sales	C.4.1 Marketing strategy C.4.2 Pricing

C.1 Management

Table: Actions inside operational objective C.1 management

Operational objective C.1 Management	
Quick overview	Via Alpina Purple and The Slovenian Mountain Trail already exist for years as a route, but not yet as a product. The infrastructure (route) is already there, the rest is missing. The roles considering the infrastructure are already determined, the roles for all other aspects of the product must be determined in the future together with the partner structure and partnership agreement. A certain budget must be ensured to prepare an action plan and for its realization.
Action C.1.1	Determination of Management structure Alpine association of Slovenia together with local alpine association clubs is the body responsible for the maintenance of the Via Alpina Purple and the Slovenian Mountain Trail. However, this is just one part of management. For further development of product, management structure, in which all tasks are identified and assigned to certain partners with correlations between, needs to be developed. For instance, local alpine association is responsible for maintenance of a certain trail section and receives a certain service fee for it from the partner who is responsible for the booking centre. The main tasks are maintenance, developing the product and its infrastructure, marketing and sales.
Timing:	2020
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> LAG EU funds for rural development, separately for Gorenjska (topic needs to be planned and integrated in both LAG local strategies 2021-2027 – already in 2020)

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cohesion policy 2021-2027 (provided the sustainable tourism development or regional development is defined as a priority topic) • INTERREG ALPINE SPACE 2021-2027
Action C.1.2	<p>Determination of budget</p> <p>To transform hiking routes from trails into products, a certain budget needs to be set for management (supply chain development, education, marketing, further development etc.). Without further investments the trails will not be self-sustainable since they will not generate much income. Without a great product behind the trail, trails are great for recreation but not for tourism. As such trails can never compete with other well-established long-distance hiking trails.</p>
Timing:	2020
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. • In case pre-project planning is needed the costs shall be covered by the BSC Management and funds and stakeholders' own funds.
Action C.1.3	<p>Determination of the action plan</p> <p>Since the trail is already set up, the action plan should focus mostly on further development of the product, marketing and sales.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. • In case pre-project planning is needed the costs shall be covered by the BSC Management and funds and stakeholders' own funds

C.2 Infrastructure

Table: Actions inside operational objective C.2 infrastructure

Operational objective C.2 Infrastructure	
Quick overview	Via Alpina Purple and The Slovenian Mountain Trail are already well-developed trails from the infrastructural point of view. However, both of them are maintained voluntarily by alpine association members. Until the trails will mainly focus on recreation of its members, this will work. Once the trails will be transformed into a product and will start focusing on tourists, the main purpose of the trail will become generating profit – at this point volunteers will have to become paid for their work.
Action C.2.1	<p>Plans for improvements</p> <p>Each trail or product needs constant improvement. Since infrastructure is a highly important determination factor in decision making process where to go on the next hiking holidays, lots of attention needs to be given to infrastructural improvements, potential new variations of some sections, new stages etc. With new variations and stages, new target groups can be selected.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as above. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. • In case pre-project planning is needed the costs shall be covered by the Municipal budgets where trails are located.
Action C.2.2	<p>Maintaining</p> <p>Each trail needs to be regularly maintained in terms of the route, signposting, mountain huts etc. Till now members of alpine associations were responsible for most of the hiking trails in Slovenia. The connection between sales and maintenance</p>

	needs to be implemented, so that all stakeholders are interested in further development of the product.
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Subject to the determined business model

C.3 Product development

Table: Actions inside operational objective C.3 Product development

Operational objective C.3 Product development	
Quick overview	Via Alpina Purple and The Slovenian Mountain Trail are well developed hiking, especially the Slovenian Mountain Trail with a long tradition and over 10.600 people who finished it. The main difference between a well-developed trail and a well-developed product are the well-established supply chain, tour operator or travel agency who can legally offer the products on the market and prepare tailor made enquires, well-established marketing and sales channels, and communication between people responsible for maintenance and the ones working with customers. Both trails were developed mainly for recreational use for local hikers who are doing mostly one or two stages at once or for hard core hiking enthusiasts. The needs of both of these types of hikers are completely different compared to customers who the product should target in the future – long-distance hikers, who would like to hike in stages, enjoy local culinary, take warm showers and have dry and fresh clothes available. The further development of the product needs to focus mainly on overcoming these barriers.
Action C.3.1	Educational events for all stakeholders To create great product all stakeholders must be actively involved. To reach this goal, many networking events must be organized so that businesses and local people along the route accept the product and see it as their own. Once it is embraced by stakeholders on different levels, the product becomes successful. Events must be educational so that all involved service providers understand what the product is, who are the guests, what are their needs etc. Such events are also the best tool for networking of stakeholders. It is much easier to connect all involved partners if they know each other in person and trust each other.
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. • Smaller additional grants possible from the Alpine convention, sponsors, American Embassy Grants...
Action C.3.2	Diversification and broadening of the supply chain The product mainly includes mountain huts while some hikers expect higher quality service. They are willing to sleep in mountain hut for a day or two but after that, they expect 3-4* level accommodation. New partners must be found to enable more accommodation options. Since both of the trails are relatively long, luggage transfer between some stages should be organized and to do that, accommodations must be accessible by road.
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	At overall product development level: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. At micro business level:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Special micro loans and micro vouchers for SMEs available locally (SPS in Slovenia) • Municipal subsidies for micro investments in tourism or agriculture in Slovenia
Action C.3.3	<p>Specialization</p> <p>The supply chain must be well connected and all (as many as possible) stakeholders must be standardized in terms of hiker-friendly specialization. Hikers expect certain level of specialization especially in terms of hiker-friendly accommodations. Some good practices of hiker-friendly accommodation can be found in Slovenia.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project.
Action C.3.4	<p>Booking centre</p> <p>The only way to control the sales of the product is to protect its brand name at least on the EU level. There were already some discussions who should be responsible for booking of this product. Few options were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Via Alpina Purple: Outdoor Slovenia is managing the trail and would like to continue doing it; • The Slovenian Mountain Trail – Alpine Association of Slovenia is looking for private travel agency or a tour operator to take this role. <p>There must be an agreement between the partner who is responsible for the maintenance and the one responsible for sales about how the profit is split. The product can also be offered to other tour operators or travel agencies, but a certain agreement about the budget for marketing and sharing the profit must be agreed in advance.</p>
Timing:	2021
Potential funding sources:	<p>For setting up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. <p>For operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Booking fees in case of a private business model • Municipal budgets (tourism tax) and booking fee in case of a public business model • Slovenian Tourism Board (to be approached)
Action C.3.5	<p>Packaging</p> <p>When product and supply chain are defined, packaging can start. With different packages different target groups can be targeted and product can be tailored according to market needs. The reality shows that packaging is an ongoing process that never stops. Market needs are constantly changing. As we can see from the statistics above the length of average stay in the destination is decreasing since short breaks are becoming more popular.</p>
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<p>For setting up:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. <p>For operation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sales income

C.4 Marketing and sales

Table: Actions inside operational objective C.4 Marketing and sales

Operational objective C.4 Marketing and sales	
Quick overview	Once management structure with budget is ready, infrastructure is established, trail is marked, supply chain is created and product is ready for the market, marketing plan needs to be prepared. Target group was already identified briefly, but to for successful, marketing and sales further investigation and decisions must be accepted.
Action C.4.1	Marketing strategy To use financial resources for marketing and sales as efficient as possible, marketing strategy must be prepared. Goals, vision, positioning, definition of the target group, internal and external communication, B2B and B2C communication etc. must be defined in the marketing strategy together with a short-term action plan. Once all this is done, the actual marketing and sales can start.
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Same as C1.1. Activity shall be integrated in the same project. • Slovenian Tourism Board (to be approached)
Action C.4.2	Pricing If the brand name of the product will be protected at least on EU level, then it will be possible to control its sales. Good example is the Alpe Adria Trail where the Slovenian part of the trail is offered by the DMO Soča Valley. In this case, pricing must be determined in terms of B2B and B2C sales.
Timing:	2022
Potential funding sources:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Depending on the selected business model • Most probably part of commercial operation

B.4 OTHER POTENTIAL CROSS BORDER PRODUCTS FOR FUTURE DEVELOPMENT

There are also some other potential products that can be developed in the future, but are currently just ideas. With future projects those ideas can be developed into successful products.

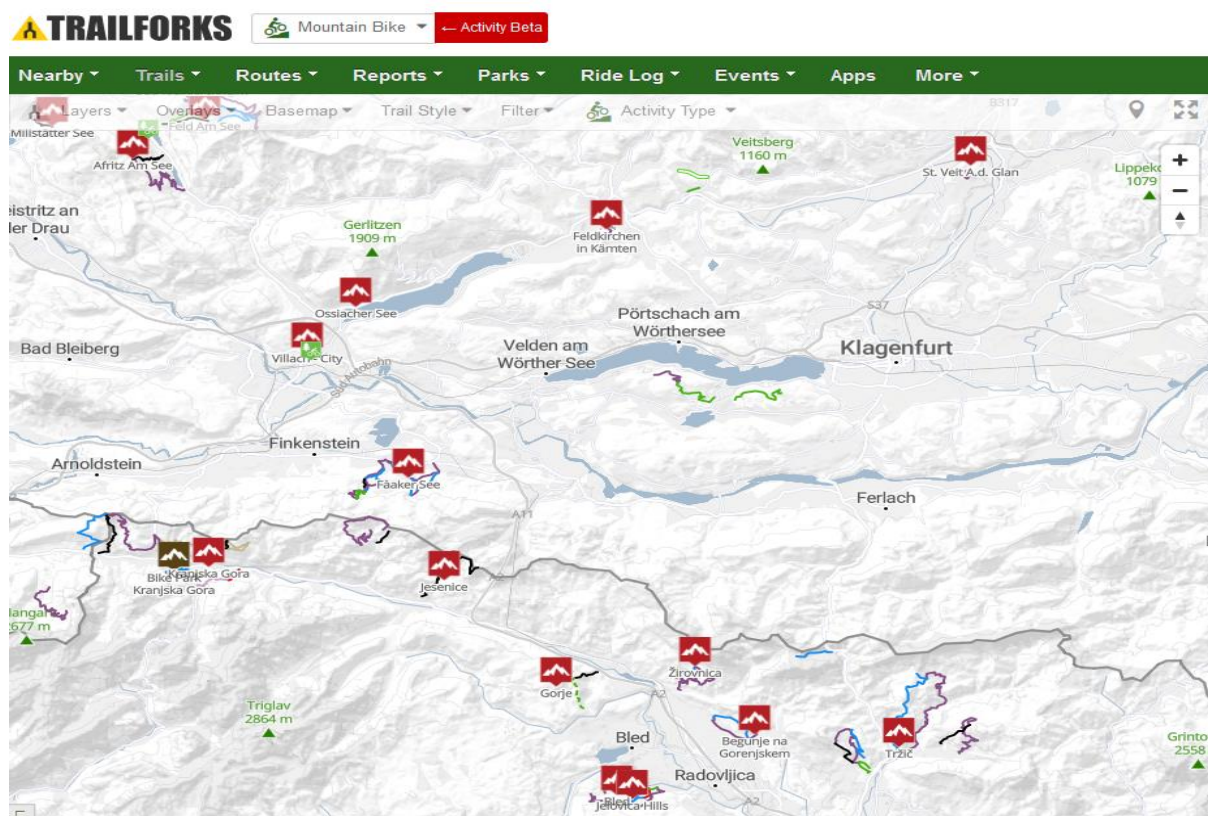
Karavanke Gravity / endure product

Karavanke mountain range presents one of the best places for developing gravity/endure based mountain biking product. The main reason is more accessible and planar terrain where you can bike practically all year around.

Current situation:

Trailforks (<https://www.trailforks.com>) is the most globally used web platform for digital marking of trails suitable for gravity/endure biking. The picture bellow shows marked trails on Karavanke mountain range. We can see that especially on the Slovenian side, there is already plenty of infrastructure for cyclists. The main problem on the Slovenian side is the legalization of this infrastructure since just a few trails have all the necessary permits. On the Austrian side, there are fewer trails, but all of them have the necessary permits. Kärnten Werbung is developing this product strategically/professionally, while on the Slovenian side the "regulation" is left to local MTB cycling communities with few positive examples.

Close to Karavanke there are also several bike/trail parks, which present a great supplement to natural trails. Some of them are: Bad Kleinkirchheim (the longest flow trail in Europe), Petzen (the second longest flow trail in Europe and together with trail park Jamnica Enduro World/European Series Venue), Bike park Kranjska Gora, Bike Park Krvavec etc. With future investments into legalization, infrastructure, building the product, supply chain, marketing and sales, they can present a successful product in Karavanke and can extend the tourist season into early Spring and late Autumn.



Future action:

1. Identification of all potential infrastructure in the Karavanke mountain range and all possible complementary nearby gravity/endure venues;
2. Identification of all interested partners for further development of the product;
3. Determination of the budget and action plan;
4. Investments plan into the infrastructure and legalization;
5. Product development together with marketing and sales;

KARAVANKE CULINARY PRODUCT

In spite of its low relevance for the final choice of destination, the majority of guests uses and enjoys the culinary offer available. It thus functions as an important building block. Food and drink reflect the culture and the soul of a country. It greatly helps (similar to scenery or the mentality of the local population) to distinguish destinations from one another and promotes authenticity, sustainability and regionalism.

Despite the linguistic and political boundaries, Karavanke area is a historically connected destination that has coexisted in a single state formation for centuries. Therefore, there are many similarities but also differences in cultural and also culinary offer. Together with the nearby Italy, the destination can form a unique culinary experience.

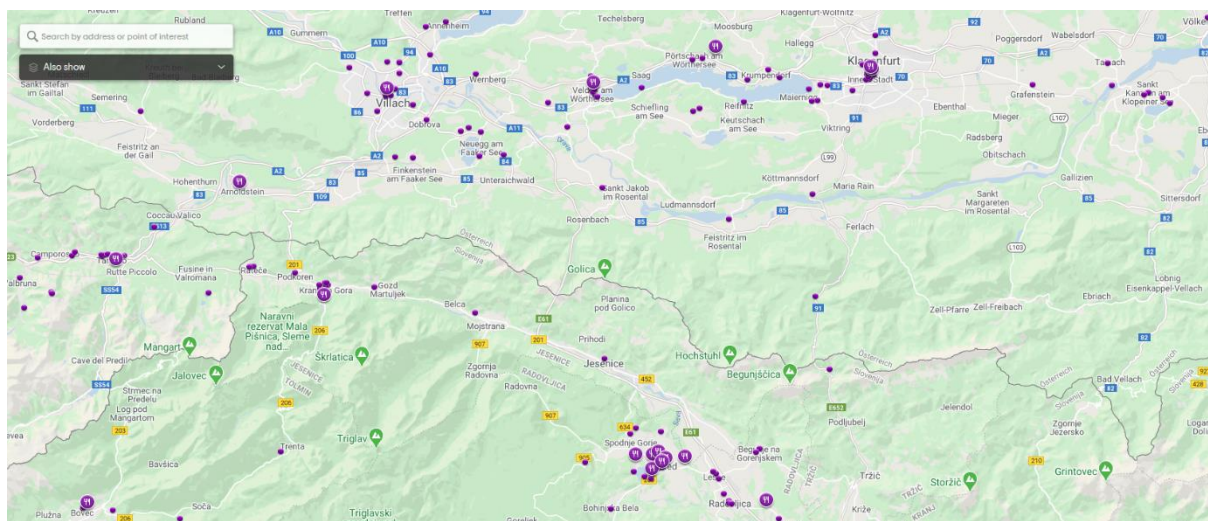
Current situation:

There were already some attempts of creating a common culinary product in the Karavanke area together with the Italian side – in the Triple border area. In 2019, a hotel chain Hit Alpinea from Kranjska Gora, created the culinary product called Dinner of three countries in which they wrote: “Experience the connection between three different regions, their cultures and most of all, their culinary styles. In three hours, you will be taken on a unique journey, introduced to region’s specific culinary characteristics, which share not just the border, but flavours and ways of preparing dishes.” The product developers connected four restaurants from three different countries. They were also rewarded in 2019 with “Snovalec” by the Slovenian Tourist Board for “the most innovative tourism product”. More information about the product is available here: <https://www.hit-alpinea.si/sl/vecerja-3-dezel-0>.

From the culinary stand point, it is important to also mention the Municipality of Radovljica and the Radovljica Tourism Board. As a destination, Radovljica presents one of the culinary leaders of Slovenia. Their main product is very well developed and related to their culinary offer. Together with local providers they organize numerous events to support the product. More information is available here: <https://www.radolca.si/en/food-and-wine/culinary-events>.

In Karavanke area we can spot other Slovenian destinations working hard on developing their local cuisine, especially Kranjska Gora and Jezersko.

Trip Advisor shows that most culinary offer is based around Bled, Radovljica and Kranjska Gora. The rest of the area is practically empty.



Future action:

1. Identification of potential interest of cross border cooperation for developing common culinary product;
2. If the interest is there, potential partners and other stakeholders must be identified;
3. Determination of budget and action plan;
4. Product development together with marketing and sales.

Karavanke Winter Product

Kranjska Gora and Arnoldstein are two main ski resorts in the Karavanke. They are both connected into the Julian Alps Skipass together with other Slovenian, Italian and Austrian ski resorts. More about the Julian Alps Skipass can be found here: <http://sloalps.com/>. There is no need for future connection and building a new product out of it.

But apart from ski resorts, winter can also offer soft-winter activities such as cross-country skiing, ski touring, sledging, skating and ice climbing.

Current situation:

The document “Analysis of Highlights” that was created during this project, enables us to get a clear review of soft winter activities offered in the partner municipalities in Slovenia and Austria.

Slovenia

Winter location	Cross-country skiing	Ski touring	Sledging	Ice skating	Ice climbing
Kranjska Gora	X	X	X	X	X
Jesenice		X			
Jezersko	X	X		X	X
Tržič		X	X		X
Žirovnica	X		X	X	
Radovljica	X				

Austria

Winter location	Cross-country skiing	Ski touring	Sledging	Ice skating	Ice climbing
Hochobir		X			
Bodental	X	X	X		
Bärental		X	X		X
Waidisch Bach					X
St. Jakob	X	X			
Faak am See		X			
Arnoldstein		X			
Sattnitz					

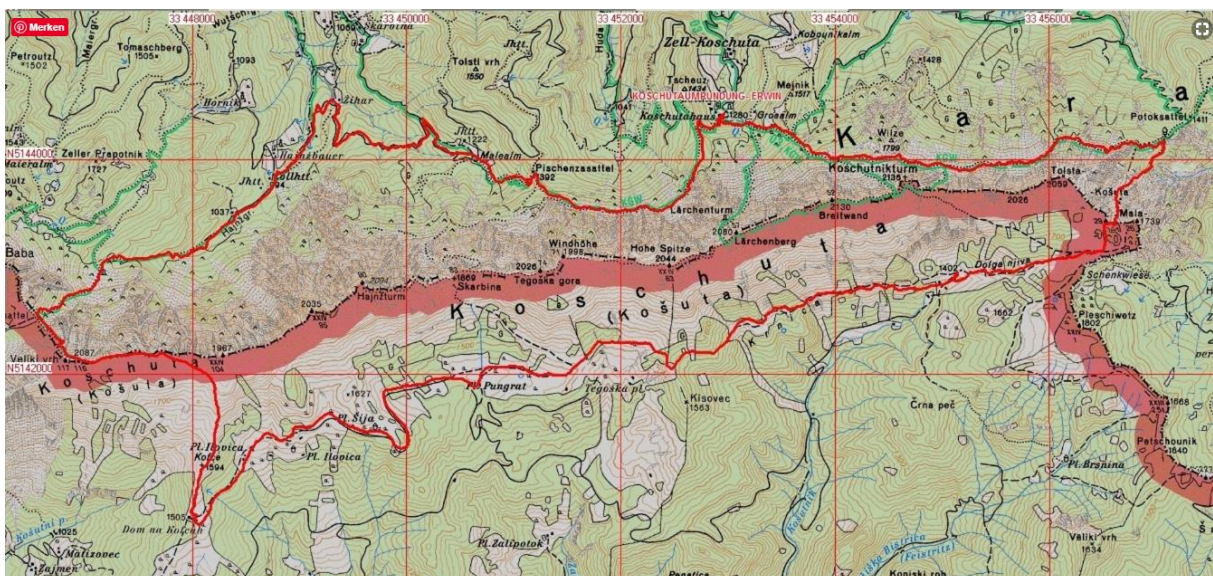
The table shows that ski touring is the most frequent soft winter activity in the Karavanke mountain range. This activity is followed by cross country skiing, sledging, ice climbing and ice skating. For the time being, these soft winter activities are not connected into a product. With the exception of cross-country skiing in Kranjska Gora and Jezersko, all the activities present a very small and niche seasonal activity that usually presents a secondary tourism product. Soft winter activities are normally not the reason for traveling to the destination, but they function as an additional activity that prolong time spent in the destination.

Future action:

1. Identification of potential interested partners for further development of the product;
2. Determination of the budget and action plan;
3. Product development together with marketing and sales;

Circular tour around the Koschuta massif

Another route with a high potential is the cross-border circular tour around the Koschuta massif, which runs through the entire project area and also includes several shelters, which are indispensable for functioning hiking products.



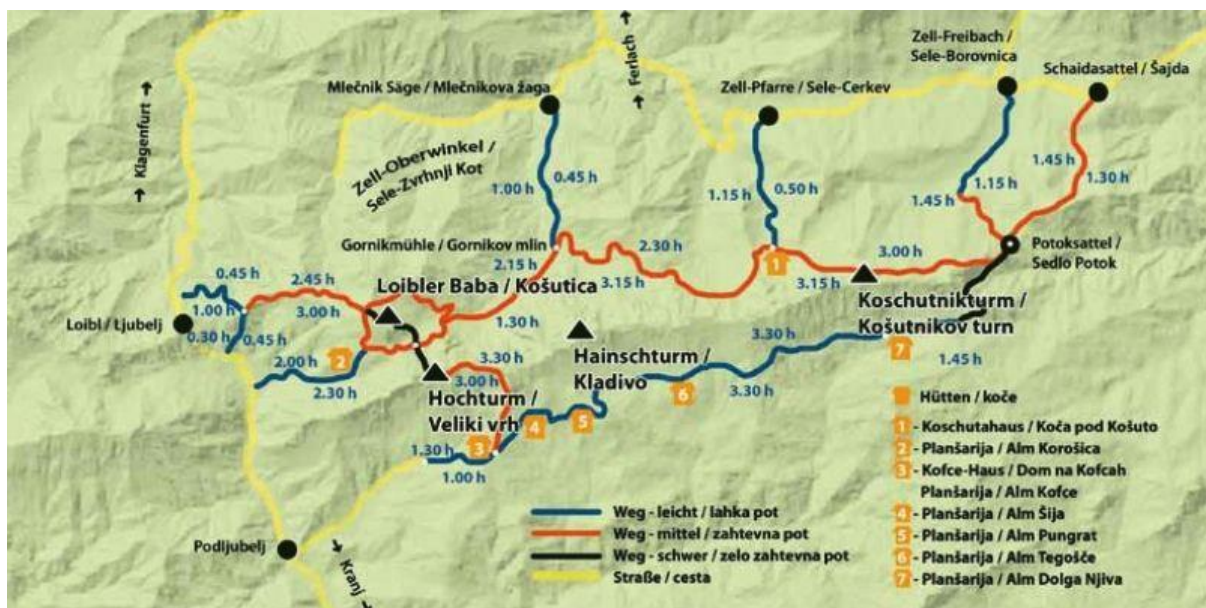
The two end points of the trail are the Loibl Pass / Ljubelj in the west and the Potok saddle / Sedlo Potok in the east. Hikers may cross or hike around the main ridge of the Koschuta massif either in the north or the south. The Koschutahaus shelter in the north and the Kofce shelter in the south are working shelters and make good starting points.

At least two days are required to complete the full trail around the Koschuta massif. The trail comprises 33km and covers an altitude of 2,500 metres.

Current situation:

Currently, the trail is considered easy (Slovenia) to intermediate (Carinthia). 2 sections are suitable only for experienced mountaineers. It might be worth checking whether other, more easily accessible passages could be used for making this trail accessible to a broader target audience. The way the trail presents itself and/or the concrete route should be evaluated, as well as opportunities for extended partnerships in the region close to the border in order to generate value for both sides.

With the annual hiking event "Koschuta Hiking", which has taken place 5 times already, a cooperation of this sort has already been initiated with Tržič, in the form of a one-day hike over a distance of 33km and an altitude of 2500 metres, or as a half-day hike over 17km and an altitude of 1,100 metres. Participants need to be in good shape, sure-footed and free from vertigo as the route includes an easy via ferrata (A/B) and some easy but unsecured rock sections (I).



(Circular trail around the Koschuta massif with access points & shelters. Source: Austrian Alpine Club)

Entry points:

- To Loibl pass/Ljubelj: In Austria, from the turn of the Loibl pass road (approx. 1km before the northern portal of the Loibl tunnel); in Slovenia, from the southern portal of the Loibl tunnel on the old road (traffic ban!) towards the high point of the pass.
- To Planina Koroica: In Slovenia, from the road to Loibl tunnel, below the Koren inn.
- To Hainsch saddle/Hajnevo sedlo: In Austria, from the Mlečnik sawmill. In Slovenia, from Planina Koroica.
- To the Kofce-Haus shelter/Dom na Kofcah: From Podljubelj via the Matizovec estate, or from Trič
- To Planina Spodnja Dolga njiva: From Trič via Jelendol and Medvodje.

- To Potok saddle/Sedlo Potok: From Zell-Freibach/Sele-Borovnica or from Schaida saddle/ajda or from Gasthaus Franzl (Trögern).
- To the Koschutahaus shelter/Koča pod Kouto from Zell-Pfarre/Sele-Cerkev
- To Hainschgraben/ Hajnevo graben from the Mlečnik sawmill

Refreshments/accommodation

- Koschutahaus shelter, 1280m, operated by Naturfreunde Kärnten. Open from mid-May until mid-October, sleeps 50
- Kofce-Haus shelter, 1488m, PD Trič. Open every day from mid-June until mid-September, otherwise only on Saturdays, Sundays and holidays, sleeps 40
- Planarija/Alm Koroica, 1554 m. Open from mid-June until mid-September, sleeps 6
- Planarija/Alm Kofce, 1488 m. Open from 1 June until 31 October, sleeps 15
- Planarija/Alm Koroica, 1523 m. Open from mid-June until mid-September, no overnight accommodation
- Planarija/Alm Pungrat, 1450m. Open from 10 June until the last Saturday in September, sleeps 14
- Planarija/Alm Tegoče, 1430m. Open from mid-June until mid-September, no overnight accommodation
- Planarija/Alm Dolga Njiva, 1400m. Open from mid-June until mid-September, no overnight accommodation

Future action:

1. Identification of potential interested partners for further development of the product;
2. Determination of the budget and action plan;
3. Product development together with marketing and sales;



3.3 C. Promotion

Priority	PROMOTION
Strategic goal	Determination of a shared identity; compilation of a marketing plan
Results	...to position the region on the international market
Operative target	A.1 Identification of the region's shared identity and history A.2 Identification of product identities A.3 Compilation of a marketing plan

A.1 IDENTIFICATION OF THE REGION'S SHARED IDENTITY AND HISTORY

With its 120-kilometers of length and strategic geographic position which at the same time divides and unites the northern central Europe from its south, Karavanke are one of the longest mountain ranges in Europe. The region between Austria and Slovenia with well-preserved natural and cultural heritage has unique character and identity.

Karavanke have their spiritual and physical power, traditions that have been staying alive for centuries. These ranges from folk and music costumes – let's not forget Karavanke are the birth place of popular alpine folk music style pioneered by brothers Avsenik from Radovljica who composed the Golica song, the most famous alpine melody in the world – to the shepherds and their cattle grazing freely on the mountain pastures, inspiring traditional milk and cheese making procedures, to nostalgic arts and crafts, rooted in natural materials, such as wood and wool, as well as culinary heritage.

From the air Karavanke look like a giant accordion bellows, where mountains, woods and pastures are expanding to infinity and gently descending towards rivers of Sava and Drava in Slovenia in the south and Austria in the north, until reaching the basins of Ljubljana, the capital of Slovenia, and Klagenfurt, the capital of Austrian Carinthia. Therefore, far reaching fresh air of the Karavanke mountain range brings together not only peoples and traditions of the two lands but also rural and urban way of life.

NAME

From the marketing point of view, there is an advantage that name Karavanke, Karawanks, Karavanke (English), Karawanken (Deutsch) or Karavanke (Slovene) is similar in different languages. Therefore, geographical name can be used also as a regional destination brand.

However, the name which is not widely perceived as well known in Europe and further, lack of the alpine character in the geographical name in comparison to the Julian Alps or Kamnik Savinja Alps.

Therefore, for the stronger brand awareness we suggest the name Karavanke, the Southern Alps of Europe, which also indicates the closeness and influence of the Mediterranean and still the shortest way from the Northern Europe to its South, allowing the traditional arts and crafts of Karavanke to flourish in the both ways across Ljubelj, the oldest European mountain road pass.

COMMON ELEMENTS OF IDENTITY

- Alpine character. Karavanke diverse alpine landscape is characterized by steep slopes, scenic mountain peaks, lush forests, valleys, gorges, rich flora and fauna, lakes and waterfalls. Keywords: mountain range, alpine lakes, panoramic views, mountain pastures
- Pristine nature. A significant proportion of the territory is protected under NATURA 2000 or other nature protection networks. Keywords: the Carniolan bee, mountain flowers, daffodils, alpine meadows, rich biodiversity
- Junction and Connection. Karavanke are situated between Gorenjska and Koroška regions in Slovenia on the south side, and the Austrian Carinthia on the north side. Keywords: charming intertwinement of two cultures, junction of the two lands, history of caravans and peoples crossing Karavanke.
- Traditions and customs. Historically well-connected area with similar traditions, customs, culture and music. Keywords: popular folk music, alpine folk music, traditional cuisine, traditional milk and cheese making, traditional arts and crafts – shoemaking, traditional leaders, ...
- Dual character. Karavanke are the mountains with two faces. The northern parts are shady with sharp rocks, the southern parts are sunny with gentle mountains and meadows. Keywords: dual character, north and south, sharp and gentle

MARKETING ADVANTAGES OF KARAVANKE REGION AS A TOURIST DESTINATION

- Remoteness of main tourist flows is the biggest advantage of Karavanke in comparison to overcrowded tourist spots. This will be especially important in the post Covid-19 period of traveling.
- In comparison to the Julian Alps the alpine character of Karavanke is milder. Therefore, they are accessible in all the four seasons and for different target groups with different levels of physical activity/fitness.
- Accessibility. Karavanke are a great starting point for short excursions or long-distance cycling or walking tours. Different terrains and activities are suitable for diverse target groups from children to MTB mountain bikers.
- All year round. Karavanke are accessible in all seasons and offer a wide range of different seasonal activities.
- Culinary offer. In Karavanke region one can experience rich culinary offer. In comparison to Julian Alps the quality of the food in [mountain huts](#) and tourist farms is significantly higher, especially in Slovenia, since majority of the huts are ranked among the best in Slovenia (Valvasorjev dom mountain hut, Kofce mountain hut and others). On the other hand, there are also micro destinations that focus their development activities on local gastronomy.

KARAVANKE MARKET POSITION

In Karavanke region there are several micro destinations with strong position and developed brand identities as well as communication tools. Some of them are also part of other regional destination unions, such as Julian Alps and Kamnik-Savinja Alps in Slovenia, or Kärnten in Austria, with developed destination management and marketing organizations (f.e. Julian Alps, Kärnten). Therefore, their marketing position is stronger as the one of Karavanke/ Karawanken region. Lack of common management marketing activities significantly lowers the brand awareness of Karavanke/ Karawanken region on national and international levels.

In order to stress out the advantages, traditions and uniqueness of the Karavanke, we suggest the formation of common verbal constants which are used in the communication and marketing activities of all the micro destinations. With the use of common wording, stressing out the character and tourist benefits of experiencing the Karavanke or staying in the area for alpine holidays, Karavanke will gain on their reputation and awareness.

- Micro destinations: Kranjska gora, Jesenice, Radovljica, Žirovnica, Tržič, Ferlach, St. Margareten, Feistritz, Finkenstein, Arnoldstein, St. Jakob
- Regional destinations: (Karavanke), Julian Alps, Kamnik-Savinja Alps, Kärnten
- National level: Austria, Slovenia

Additional positioning: Slovenia Green Destinations, Natura 2000, UNESCO Global Geoparks

DESKTOP ANALYSIS OF KARAVANKE BRAND

We analyzed the usage of Karavanke brand on national levels and local destination levels according to the presentations and mentions of the Karavanke on the websites of the partners of the project.

CONCLUSIONS:

The name Karavanke is not widely used as a destination regional brand yet, usually it is used as a geographical term, connected to activities taking place in the Karavanke region, which is nevertheless a good starting point to begin building the common storytelling and identity through tourist products and offer.

There is no common usage of name in descriptions of partners. The name varies: The Karavanke Alps, Karavanke/Karawanken Mountains, Karavanke/ Karawanken, Karavanke/ Karawanken range...

Search results (Google, Internet Explorer) of the Karavanke / Karawanken are usually in connection to tourist offer (hiking, biking, Geopark...).

The highest number of search results is connected to Karavanke [tunnel](#) / Karavanke tunnel.

Marketing advantages presented on web pages are in line with identified advantages in previous chapter.

Official web page of Slovenia tourist board (www.slovenia.info)

There are several descriptions about Karavanke, from general descriptions to product descriptions such as Trans Karavanke trail, Hiking to Golica, Karavanke Geopark...

General descripton: The Karavanke Alps

Explore the natural beauties of the Karavanke Alps, the longest Slovenian mountain range. Numerous trails lead you to panoramic mountain tops, mountain pastures, valleys, and gorges. On the way, take a look at waterfalls, diverse plant and animal species, rich nature, and preserved cultural heritage. Here, marvel at the natural wonder of daffodils on Mt. Golica, which are so lush and dense when they bloom in the spring that they almost seem like a covering of snow.

<https://www.slovenia.info/en/things-to-do/active-holidays/hiking-backpacking/mountains>

Official web of Austria tourist board (www.austria.info)

On Austria's official web page mention of Karawanken (Karavanke) is rare. In description of province Carinthia there is a focus on lakes, views on Karavanke range are also mentioned. As an advantage closeness to Slovenia and Italy is stressed out and also folk music performances and tourist offer in all seasons.

Carinthia

Carinthia is probably Austria's best kept secret: a beautiful province with over 200 splendid lakes that speckle a landscape marked by high peaks and gouged valleys. Perfect slopes and great snow conditions for skiing trips, plus top spa and wellness hotels for summer retreats, make this province an Austrian paradise in any season.

The rugged beauty of Carinthia is widely overlooked. Hundreds of splendid lakes speckle a landscape marked by high peaks and gouged valleys, most notably the Grossglockner, Austria's tallest mountain. The nearby Pasterze glacier can be reached by funicular railway.

Carinthia is a great destination to visit in the summer - many villages host summer festivals, complete with folk music and performers from nearby Italy and Slovenia. The walled villages of Friesach and Gmund are a treat, as is the impressive hilltop fortress in Hochosterwitz.

[Klagenfurt](#), Carinthia's capital, is ideally located near Wörthersee lake, one of Europe's largest and warmest Alpine lakes.

Source: <https://www.austria.info/en/where-to-go/provinces/carinthia>

Adventure

Lake [Wörthersee](#), or Lake Wörth, is the largest lake in Carinthia, and, due to climatic conditions, one of the warmest Alpine lakes. In summer, the water – of drinkable purity, by the way – reaches temperatures of 28°C (82°F). When the lake freezes, it becomes one the largest skating rinks in Austria.

Situated in a depression in the mid-Carinthian hill country, the lake is surrounded by a dreamy landscape of mountain peaks. The view extends all the way to the Karavanke Range to the South, and to the foothills of the forested Ossiacher Tauern mountain ridge in the North. There's also a large bathing beach at Lake Wörthersee's Eastern bay, an illuminated running trail, a demanding fitness course at Kreuzbergl mountain, a golf course, and ideal conditions for sailing. The very challenging [Kärnten Ironman Austria race](#) is considered a sporting highlight of the year.

Source: <https://www.austria.info/en/where-to-go/cities/klagenfurt>

Official web page of Kärnten Werbung Marketing GmbH (www.visitcarinthia.at)

There are several descriptions about Karavanks, from general descriptions of micro destinations to product descriptions such as Karavanke Geopark and Drau Cycle Path on official webpage.

Usually they Karavanks are presented with following descriptions: impressive Karawanken mountain chain, Karawanken mountain range, Karawanken Mountains, mighty Karawanken summits.

Finkenstein - Carinthia's South Seas

The municipality of Finkenstein am Faaker See is situated between Carinthia's main river, the Drau, and the Karavanke mountain range.

Carinthia's South Seas, as Lake Faaker See is also known, not only has wonderful facilities for swimming and water sports, but also its own island hotel.

Starting from Finkenstein there are great options for hiking (Alpe-Adria-Trail), climbing (Kanzianiberg) and cycling. And an 18-hole golf course awaits everyone looking for a game with a small white ball. Individualists will like the unspoiled Lake Aichwaldsee, which is an inviting place for skating and ice hockey in winter. ...

<https://www.visitcarinthia.at/destinations/places/finkenstein-faak-am-see/>

St. Jakob im Rosental/Šentjakob v Rožu

Far away from all the tourism hustle and bustle, nestling between the impressive Karavanke mountain chain and the Drau reservoir, is the market municipality of St. Jakob im Rosental, which forms part of the Carnica Region Rosental.

There are a wide variety of sports and leisure options in the municipality whatever the season: in summer you can go on wonderful hikes (Slow Trail, family hiking trail), cycle along the Drau Cycle Path R1 (5-star quality cycle route), go climbing, play tennis, go fishing or enjoy the natural surroundings.

In winter there is skating, skiing for the youngest visitors on the "Finis-Planai" including a children's tow lift, and cross-country skiing (Carinthian cross-country training centre in St. Jakob im Rosental) on offer.
<https://www.visitcarinthia.at/destinations/places/st-jakob-im-rosental/>

Ferlach

The southernmost town in Austria, situated at the foot of the Karavanke mountain chain, looks back over a centuries-old tradition as a town of gunsmiths.

The gunsmiths' craft that is unique to Ferlach was honoured in 2010 by UNESCO as part of its intangible cultural heritage. This craft, which has a rich tradition, is presented at Ferlach Castle in the Gunsmiths and Hunting Museum. The fascinating nearby Carnica Bee Museum in Kirschentheuer provides information about the tradition of beekeeping. Here you can discover interesting details about the Carnica bee and its interactions with the human habitat. Ferlach is also a good starting point for hikes in the Karavanke and cycle tours on the Drau Cycle Path.

Particular gems of nature are the wild yet romantic [Tscheppaschlucht Gorge](#) with its high ropes course, and the Meerauge kettle lake and Märchenwiese fairy tale meadow in the Bodental Valley. The idyllic swimming pond in Reßnig is an inviting place for swimming and fishing.

In winter the romantic winter landscape of the Bodental Valley delights visitors with facilities for downhill skiing, ski tours, snowshoe hikes, and cross-country skiing along trails awarded the piste quality seal.
<https://www.visitcarinthia.at/destinations/places/ferlach/>

St. Margareten im Rosental

Carinthia's string bean municipality

The municipality of St. Margareten im Rosental, which has just over 1,000 inhabitants, lies at the foot of the Hochobir in the south-east part of the Rosental Valley.

Both the locals and guests appreciate the untouched natural surroundings and the numerous options for relaxed and active leisure activities. As well as tennis, angling and swimming, above all the beauties of the natural surroundings can best be enjoyed when hiking. The Hochobir massif is one of the most beautiful paradises in Carinthia for alpine flowers. Leisure cyclists can hit the pedals on the Drau Cycle Path.

From a culinary perspective, once a year the municipality devotes itself to string beans. There is something for every taste at the annual September string bean festival, with string bean salami, string bean chili and even a sweet string bean apple strudel. There is also a lively programme with live music and cultural offerings.

<https://www.visitcarinthia.at/destinations/places/st-margareten-im-rosental/>

Feistritz im Rosental

A hint of rose blossom against a breathtaking mountain panorama

Feistritz im Rosental fully does justice to its name. The Rosenpark is home to over 6,000 rose bushes of the finest varieties, while a visit to the Rose Museum is a treat for the senses.

But it is not just in summer that the municipality bears a hint of the delicate scent of rose blossom. In spring too, the floors of the surrounding woods are covered with a carpet of flowering Christmas roses. And in summer you can admire the water lilies in a wealth of colours in publicly accessible natural ponds and natural swimming lakes.

The tourism establishments also devote themselves to this theme with their own rose menus, rose drinks and rose decorations. Restaurants, taverns and mountain lodges preserve the down-to-earth, culinary Carinthian traditions.

Hikers and climbers can enjoy unique experiences of nature with a fabulous mountain panorama at altitudes of up to 1,660 metres above sea level. One of the most popular routes is the ascent to the Klagenfurter Hütte, a mountain lodge that has been in existence for 110 years.

<https://www.visitcarinthia.at/destinations/places/feistritz-im-rosental/>

Arnoldstein

At the intersection of three countries and cultures

Arnoldstein is in the south of Carinthia, at the point where Austria, Italy and Slovenia meet. The Dreiländereck is the municipality's local mountain, and marks the cut-off point between the countries.

In summer hikers abound here, and in winter it is a place where downhill skiers and ski tourers meet. The Alpe Adria Cycle Path runs through the municipal territory. In one week it leads from Salzburg, the city of Mozart, through the Hohe Tauern National Park across Carinthia to Grado, on the Upper Adriatic.

If you are interested in culture, you should pay a visit to the ruined Arnoldstein Monastery, which has been lovingly revitalised since 1992 and is now the scene of events, exhibitions and small concerts.

Official web page of Region Villach Tourismus GmbH

There are several descriptions about Karavanke on official webpage. General description emphasizes imposing panorama, junction of two countries and the highest peak.

Villach

Take a deep breath - walk - enjoy. In clear altitude air, with an imposing panorama, on lush mountain meadows. Very close to the sky. The Karavanke belong to the mountain group of the southern Limestone Alps, where the border between Austria and Slovenia has run along the main ridge since 1919. The highest peak is Hochstuhl, followed by Hochobir and Feistritzer Spitz. In the west, the impressive Mittagskogel dominates at 2145 metres. The craggy rocky walls and big areas of scree of the Karavanke present a magnificent background for the central Carinthian mountain landscape all around Wörthersee, Faaker See, Klagenfurt and Villach.

<https://www.visitvillach.at/en/karawanken.html>

Official web page of Kranjska gora (www.kranjska-gora.si)

General description of Karavanke mountains emphasizes alpine character, unspoiled nature, preserved cultural heritage and diverse opportunities for active spending of free time. There is an interesting description of Karavanke Mountains as a convoy of mountains which refers to the direction of ridges and valleys.

Karavanke Mountains = a convoy of mountains

The Karavanke Mountains got their name from the typical east-west direction of ridges and valleys, which follow like a convoy.

In the Karavanke we can find steep slopes, panoramic peaks, mountains, valleys, gorges, waterfalls, a diverse flora and fauna, rich nature and a preserved cultural heritage. The unspoiled nature and the distinctiveness of the flora and fauna make them an integral part of the [Natura 2000](#) area.

The mountains and hills with the regulated hiking and mountaineering trails, suitable for easy hikes or more demanding ascends offer diverse opportunities for active spending of free time for various target groups. The Karavanke are the ideal choice for short escapes into nature as well as for a few-days of walking and resting.

The beautiful Karavanke peak of Kepa (2,143 m) can be climbed from more directions right from the [Upper Sava Valley](#).

<https://www.kranjska-gora.si/en/sightseeing/natural-sights/view-points/karavanke-mountains>

Official web page of Radolca (www.radolca.si)

On Radolca web page general description of Karavanke mountains emphasizes alpine character, superb views and mt. Stol. Special focus is on mountain pastures.

Radolca

The Karavanke await you with mountain pastures and the high peaks above them which offer superb views across Slovenia and Austrian Carinthia. Ascend them in summer or in winter.

To the north the Radovljica plains end on the southern slopes of the West Karavanke at Stol (2236m above sea-level), Vrtača (2181m above sea-level) and Begunjščica (2060m above sea-level). The mountain pastures beneath the peaks are easily accessible on foot. Beneath Begunjščica there are three mountain pastures: Polška planina, planina Planinca and planina Preval – which are still full of life and can be reached on marked trails from the Draga valley in Begunje.

During summer herds of cattle and sheep graze the pastures. These hiking trails are also accessible in winter.

Experienced hikers will enjoy conquering Mt. Stol, the highest peak in the Karavanke range. It can be reached from the Završnica valley near Žirovnica via the Valvasorjev dom mountain hut. The peak of Vrtača can be ascended from the Ljubelj pass, whilst Begunjščica, which some people also call 'the mountain with a hundred ravines' can be summited from the Draga valley via the Roblekov dom mountain hut or via the planina Preval mountain pasture.

<https://www.radolca.si/en/attractions/nature/karavanke>

Official web page of Jesenice (turizem.jesenice.si)

The whole identity of Jesenice destination is built on steel industry and flowers daffodils which are typical for mt. Golica, the green mountain of Karavanke.

Golica

*Golica is one of the most noticeable and green mountains in the Karavanke. All paths start in Planina pod Golico. It is only an-hour walk along the shortcut in the direction of Savske jame to the famous and friendly mountain hut on Golica (1582 m). The path along the ridge is much longer (2 to 3 hours) and more tiring, but much more rewarding because of wonderful views. It is not far from the hut to the top of Golica (1835 m) although it may seem closer than it really is. Golica is famous for fields of daffodils. On lower fields they are in blossom already in May while at higher altitudes you can admire them in June. There are a lot of mountain flowers on rocky ridges. Among others you will be able to admire hawksbeard (*Crepis bocconi*) and Alpine clubmoss (*Diphasiastrum alpinum*). Brown Alpine grayling and reddish rattle grasshoppers are flittering there. During the descent to the valley you will be able to admire green-blue dragonflies. The most famous popular folk song Na Golici, which is also the most popular polka in the world, was named after Golica. The song was written in the 1950s by Slavko Avsenik, adapted by Vilko Avsenik and played by Ansambel bratov Avsenik (Brothers Avsenik Ensemble).*

<https://turizem.jesenice.si/en/attractions/natural-attractions/item/13771-golica-1-835-m>

Official web page of Tržič (www.visit-trzic.com)

On Tržič web page several Karavanke activities and attractions are presented. One of the focuses is also rich geological heritage of Karavanke Mountains.

The Dovžan Gorge- Who will be the first to find a dinosaur?

The Dovžan Gorge is located in the central part of the Karavanke Mountains, Slovenia's longest mountain range. Within it lies a unique site of rocks dating from the late Paleozoic Era. Take a walk through the gorge and learn about the rich geological heritage uncovered by the Tržič Bistrica River, a mountain river that carved a riverbed through the diverse rock deposits.

<https://www.visit-trzic.com/en/attractions/natural-attractions/the-dovzan-gorge.html>

Official web page of Žirovnica (visitzirovnica.com)

Žirovnica as destination position itself as the cradle of beekeeping in Slovenia. Karavanke are mentioned as a hiking option.

Green energy invigorates! Žirovnica *is surrounded by the Alps, meadows and forests that are just beckoning for outdoor recreation. The green Završnica valley is ideal for walking and cycling; the high Karavanke mountain range invites lovers of hiking and offers views of Lake Bled and the surrounding area. The Završnica Recreational Park offers sports, fun and picnics. Romance awaits you on horseback and while watching the stars through the windows of a mountain hut.*

<https://visitzirovnica.si/en/experiences/green-energy/>

Official web page of Jezersko (jezersko.info)

Destination Jezersko emphasizes the alpine character and natural and cultural diversity. Geographically they refer more one Kamnik-Savinja Alps.

Jezersko, green valley

Jezersko is a picturesque valley, surrounded from the east by high summits of sixty million years old Kamnik-Savinja Alps and from the west by more than three hundred million years old coral reef; this is the place where in the new Europe the abolished northern border with Austria no longer separates the Slovenes from both sides of the mountains; the valley which continues through the longest Slovenian

village Kokra into the core of Slovenia – the green pearl of Europe, so rich and diverse in its nature and its culture.

<http://www.jezersko.info/en/>

BRAND AND FORMATION OF VERBAL CONSTANTS

Until now Karavanke mountains has not achieved a significant brand awareness. The brand lacks common marketing activities and storytelling since different names and elements of identity are in usage. There is no common visual identity as well.

However, it is important that regardless of the exact usage of the wording, the common advantages, characteristics and Unique Selling Propositions are stressed out, hence the common perception is spontaneously and constantly built in the minds of tourists when searching their inspiration on the regional or local destination websites of Austria and Slovenia.

For further development and brand awareness the formation of the verbal constants is necessary in order to start building the brand name and story while incorporating them into product marketing and sales activities.

In the first stage the common usage of name and slogan should be defined.

Brand name: Karavanke Alps / Karawanken Alpen

Even if the correct spelling in English is Karavanke, we suggest keeping the Slovenian geographic name **Karavanke**, as the Google and IE searches indicate that Karavanke as a keyword is completely aligned with Karavanke searching keyword.

We suggest usage of the geographical name together with the plural noun ALPS in order to build common name brand perception.

Slogan

Karavanke Alps,

Accordion of Experience from Austria to Slovenia

Accordion as a typical instrument of [alpine folk music](#) strengthening the Alpine position of Karavanke, telling the story of common folk, music and other traditions and costumes.

In the communication practices of Alpine destinations, accordion is rarely connected to active experiences. This stresses out the importance of alpine musical traditions and other folk costumes, arts and crafts in the Karavanke Alps, which contribute to the unique appeal of the Karavanke as a destination.

Although you cannot hear the music in the wording, the usage of the word, connected to music gives you the sense of joy, action and specific alpine tradition. There is also an allusion to top down satellite view of the Karavanke Alps, since the bellows could remind us of Karavanke [mountain range](#), its slopes, pastures, woods and finally rivers. Due to the focus on common tourist product development and marketing, this communication also emphasizes the importance of experiences and activities.

Stressing out the junction and experience of the two countries is equally important from the marketing point of view.



Source: www.slovenia.info, Aleš Krivec

Invitation with the wording of the Unique Selling proposition of remoteness and usage of the verb FEEL, featuring in Slovenian and Austrian national destinations brands.

Karavanke Alps

Get away from it all.

Feel the Accordion of Experience from Austria to Slovenia.

Guidelines for communication of Karavanke lead story

It is important that all micro destinations cooperate in the process of establishing and strengthening the image of Karavanke brand. This requires ongoing [marketing](#) initiatives intended to reinforce the target groups' perceptions. Despite the limitations and lack of joint management or joint marketing activities the building of the brand name can successfully continue in cooperation of micro destinations and providers of Karavanke tourist products. Common name, slogan and story, exposure of advantages and Unique Selling Propositions are necessary for reinforcement of the brand name and its perception.

Standardizing the usage of name Karavanke Alsp / Karawanken Alps

The name of Karavanke Alps should be used in different communication channels as much as possible. Since the name itself lack the alpine character it is important, that we reinforce this position with additional explanation. Therefore, we use verbal constant: Karavanke Alps / Karawanken Alps. For additional explanation, we recommend the usage of following verbal constant, which clearly explains the luxury of space and the character of geography: 120 kilometres of European Southern Alps, one of the longest mountain ranges of Europe.

Usage of slogan, which does not explain but inspire and engage emotionally: Accordion of Alpine Experience from Austria to Slovenia.

With slogan we strengthen the marketing position and we upgrade the image of a destination in a picturesque way. Since brand has no visual identity slogan can help us to create the feel and imagery of a brand.

Consistently using the lead story of the Karavanke Alps

Lead story should be used in all channels of communication including the channels of micro destinations.

Consistently using the product story of Karavanke Alps

All micro destinations should include short presentation of Karavanke region and its key tourist products / experiences in their channels of communication (web page).

Using the verbal constants to communicate the advantages and Unique Selling Proposition

For the description of Karavanke advantages verbal constants should be used. In that way we strengthen their market position.

Some examples: *get away from it all, feel the accord of experiences in all seasons, the best panoramic views of Austria and Slovenia, from Ljubljana to Klagenfurt, the pristine nature and preserved heritage, alpine pastures and flowers, mild alpine character, welcoming accessibility, shelter from the crowds, a views*

Using of Karavanke hashtag: #KaravankeAlps, #KaravankeExperience, #feelAustriaSlovenia

Hashtag should be used in all channels of communication including the channels of micro destinations. Additionally national hashtags #ifeelsLOVEria and [#feelaustria](#) should be used.

THE LEAD STORY OF THE KARAVANKE MOUNTAINS

The Karavanke Alps, Accordion of Experience from Austria to Slovenia

“Can you hear the music of the Southern Alps? Both, the bellows and bells, the music of joyous accordion in the valleys, the sounds of freely grazing cows and sheep in the mountains resonate the story of a unique tradition in the Karavanke Alps. This is where the brothers Avsenik, the pioneers of a popular national folk music were born, engraved in the collective memory of the peoples of northern Slovenia and southern Austria as strongly as the love of nature and alpine flowers. Today, Karavanke Alps are your accordion of Experience. Come here to get away from it all, feel the warmth and the beauty.”

The mountain ridges of the Karavanke Mountains between Austria and Slovenia have been bearers of countless memories since prehistoric times. Ancient routes run between the north and the south, the Alps and the Mediterranean, and the Drava and Sava rivers. Whether the Karavanke were named after a hind deer by the mysterious Celts or were named after the ridges and valleys that extend like a caravan from Europe's east to west, it matters not. When one stands on Europe's beautiful balcony – as either a hiker, cyclist, mountain runner, paraglider, or purely those seeking fresh mountain air – the beauty is breathtaking. The 120-kilometre mountain range makes one feel significantly lighter and smaller, especially in the knowledge that it provides shelter and energy for all the resorts of Slovenia's Gorenjska region as well as Austria's Carinthia region all year round.

The Magnificence of Space and Time, Away from it all

The Karavanke have a special appeal. People have yet to discover that this is where the shared heart of Europe is hidden. As soon as you find yourself in this green world, you are enveloped in pristine nature and silence. When standing atop the peaks of the Karavanke, you can see the Ljubljana Basin to the south and the Klagenfurt basin to the north. Even the name of the highest mountain of the Karavanke itself gives a clue to how welcoming and enjoyable this mountain range is, as you can take a seat on top of the 'Big Chair' (Mt. Veliki Stol), the 2,234-metre 'king' of the Karavanke peaks. In addition to Mt. Stol, enthusiastic mountaineers are also drawn to the expansive views from the top of Mt. Vrtača and Mt. Begunjščica, the two mountains with the best views of mighty Mt. Stol. Those who prefer to marvel at the high peaks from a distance can instead enjoy spending time on the extensive green mountain plateaus, where the cow bells provide an air of calm, the hospitality of solitary farms is comforting, and the fresh Alpine air is rejuvenating.

Panoramic Views from Austria to Slovenia

All of the routes across the Karavanke Mountains were once united under the crown of the medieval Habsburg Dynasty, which ruled a large part of Europe for 650 years. To this day, the mountain plateaus and peaks of the Karavanke still offer the best views over the kingdom of the Julian Alps. The wealth of the fauna and flora of the Karavanke is preserved and protected, with the mountains being home to many sites of nature under the EU's Natura 2000 ecological network. Those who set out to explore the Karavanke at the end of spring might be lucky enough to be greeted by the largest orchid in Slovenia and Europe, otherwise known as the lady's-slipper orchid, which are found where sunrays penetrate the edge of the forest. This endangered plant can now only be found in the Karavanke. As these mountains are also famous for daffodils, the whiteness of the sloping meadows at the beginning of summer should come as no surprise. They grow so close together they make you feel as if you are floating above the clouds. In addition to the fauna, in summer herds of sheep and cows can be seen grazing on endless grassy pastures. Be sure to take time to explore the Karavanke Geopark, a UNESCO protected site, listed for its outstanding geological heritage and biodiversity.

The Welcoming Remoteness of a Mountain Caravan

The vastness of space provided by the Karavanke is unique and gives some of the best views of Slovenia as well as Carinthia in Austria. When you reach one of the Karavanke ridges after a few hours of exploration, you suddenly realize you're almost completely alone. This Alpine mountain range provides shelter from crowds and gives a feeling that you are the first to ever reach the summits. There are breathtaking views of both Slovenia's and Austria's Alpine valleys, with lakes glistening in all kinds of shades of blue and green. In the summer months, you can freely indulge in the freshness and remoteness of this hiking oasis. Let the mountain sun kiss your face and the fresh breeze cool you down while you surrender to total relaxation, or stay a while longer and watch the sun set from atop one of the Karavanke peaks. There's nothing better than being in nature's embrace while taking in the last sunrays of the day which glisten behind the mountains. In the evening hours, when the sun sets and it's yet to get dark, the crimson sky slowly turns dark blue. Be sure to bring your binoculars so you can read the stories of stars in the sky.

Two faces of Kravanke Alps: Sun and Shades, Orderliness and Relaxation, Mountains and Valleys

When exploring one of the longest and most accessible mountain ranges in Europe, one experiences the charming intertwinement of two cultures and worlds at every step: a union of northern orderliness and Mediterranean relaxation. The paths often lead along the border of the two countries, so it is possible to have one foot on Slovenian pastures whilst touching Austrian slopes with the other. There are no other two countries in Europe where it is as easy to juggle with an open heart and take in vast

views as in the Karavanke. People exude hospitality and friendliness everywhere you go. For refreshment, you can indulge in authentic Alpine tastes. Enjoy traditional shepherds' food or hearty dishes, which can bring back fond memories of your childhood, and the views of the surrounding peaks just top it all off. On a clear day try to spot Mt. Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain, which rises far into the heights of the Julian Alps.

4 Seasons and 365 Days of Accordion of Experiences

The ridges of the Karavanke are appealing in all seasons. The numerous hiking and cycling trails that wind through ravines and lead towards peaks beckon year-round. Thanks to their easy accessibility, they are not only suitable for adrenaline enthusiasts but also for active families with kids. There are many great starting points for exploring the Karavanke. In Slovenia, these are Kranjska Gora, Jesenice, Žirovnica, Radovljica, Tržič, and Jezersko. In Austria, they are the most accessible from Arnoldstein, Finkenstein, St. Jakob im Rosental, Feistritz im Rosental, Ferlach, and St. Margareten im Rosental.

Inhale the Karavanke Air, Exhale Your Worries

There are quite a few thriving, vibrant resort towns not far away from this pristine nature retreat. Visit Lake Wörthersee, which is sustained by underwater springs and surrounded by dense forests. The Alpine peaks in its background also create a special feel that resembles the Mediterranean climate at times, which is why Lake Wörthersee is also referred to by some as the 'Carinthian Sea'. Take time to discover Kranjska Gora, with its endless possibilities for activities and Alpine rejuvenation year-round. Inhale the fresh Alpine air and exhale your day-to-day worries. And if you want to sweeten your life, then Lake Bled (which is home to Slovenia's only island) awaits not far away from the Karavanke Mountains.

A.2 IDENTIFICATION OF PRODUCT IDENTITIES

For further development three products were identified as products with the highest potential for further development: long-distance cycling, biking product Trans Karavanke and hiking product.

NAME

The joint products should strengthen marketing position and image of Karavanke region, therefore it is important that word Karavanks (Karavanke/Karawanken) is included in their name (Trans Karavanke, Around the Blue Lakes of the Karavanke Alps).

In order to add specific and unique tone/perception to the tourist products, we always (if possible) add the noun ACCORDION which strengthens the experiential feeling of the journey and recalls the musical and ethnological traditions of the Karavanke Alps.

In Addition, tourist products offer a great opportunity to stress out the junction of the two lands, two cultures, two peoples and two countries – Austria and Slovenia.

PRODUCT STORIES AND ADVANTAGES

Product advantages and main stories are partly identified in chapter 2.2. Product development.

Trekking product KARAVANKE CYCLING ACCORDION - Around the blue lakes of Austria and Slovenia

- Route around Karavanke mountain range with a focus on lakes.
- Connects well-recognized tourist areas with lakes as the main attractions: Bled, Wolkelmarker Strausee, Wörther See and Ossiacher See.
- One route, three countries and whole Karavanke mountain range.
- Pleasant cycling and perfect combination of recreation and relaxation in Alpine lakes.

Biking product TRANS KARAVANKE ACCORDION – MTB adrenaline from Austria to Slovenia

- Adventurous spirit. The route is made for serious mountain bikers that are physically well prepared.
- Less crowded slopes. Places with not many tourists so bikers are welcome.
- The highest and best-equipped Karavanke mountain and hiking huts in Slovenia. Local food.
- The best views of both the Austrian and the Slovenian Alpine world.

Hiking product KARAVANKE HIKING ACCORDION – The panoramic backbone of Austria and Slovenia

- Longer hiking season, which extends into early spring and late autumn.
- Dual character with steeper Austrian slopes and gradual Slovenian slopes.
- Best views. Karavanke serve as an extended viewpoint balcony with stunning views.
- The Slovenian Mountain Trail connects the best hiking spots into one trail. Panoramaweg Südalpen is known for beautiful views on the high peaks in the North and Dinarides in the South. Via Alpina Purple connects the Eastern Limestone Alps, from the Karavanke to the Allgäu.

PRODUCT SUBSTORIES

KARAVANKE ALPS CYCLING ACCORDION

Long-distance cycling route from Austria to Slovenia

There's no need to reach the very top of peaks to experience the Karavanke in all their might. The most beautiful views over one of the longest European mountain ranges start in its foothills. If you mount your bike, you can loop around the Karavanke through Slovenia, Austria, and also Italy. Like a citizen of the Karavanke, you will cycle through three countries which share a diverse topography and a mutual history. Sleepy mountain villages and vibrant towns in valleys are full of charm wherever you go. The Karavanke reward cyclists with their endless palette of colourful ridges as you pedal through picturesque valleys where the shades of green reach skywards. After a full day of cycling, reward yourself by dipping your tired feet into the rejuvenating waters of one of the numerous Alpine lakes. Let the blue eyes of the Alps entice you. You can feel the closeness of the Mediterranean in the air, and in the summer months these Alpine lakes are so warm you can confidently take a dip. For the perfect ending to the day, gaze at the colours of the sun setting over the surface of lakes. Those who choose to cycle the entire circular route will get to know all the faces of the Karavanke Mountains. You can also make use of the great public transportation options to shorten the cycling stages, from where you can admire views of the peaks out the window of a train puffing through valleys and tunnels – a combination of pleasant cycling and enjoying the Alps without too much effort.

Along Mountain Streams on the Best-Rated Bicycle Routes

In Austria, you can ride alongside the Drava River, a European river that winds its way from the Alpine heights to the distant plains of the Pannonian Basin. Cycling from west to east, you will be following its diverse flow: sometimes it's vibrant but mostly it's slow. Embrace its meandering ways as this bicycle route is meant for only the truest of pleasure seekers. These are some of the few bicycle paths with the highest rating in Europe. The ADFC, the most important international organization for classifying bicycle routes, has awarded the route along the Drava river five stars. Stunning views and charming lakes can be seen all along the way. Cycling the entire loop of Lake Ossiach (Ossiacher See) you will have a chance to familiarize yourself with picturesque small towns and a monastery full of history, and soak up the best view of the lake from the cable car. Marvel at the turquoise surface of the largest lake in Austrian Carinthia, Lake Wörther (Wörthersee) and all the green islands peering out of its seemingly endless surface. Dive into the lake or explore it by boat, sailboat, or stand-up paddleboard. The bicycle route will also take you to the Völkermarkt Reservoir (Völkermarkter Stausee), where the river widens into an appealing lake. Cross to the other side by bike to get the best view.

On the Sunny Side of the Karavanke Alps and Life

After a relaxing cycle along the Drava River, you will face a rather challenging uphill cycle when crossing the Karavanke on your way into Slovenia. We don't say it out of vanity, but Slovenia truly does lie on the sunny side of the Alps. Your journey will lead you downwards towards the Adriatic coast, where you can feel the fresh sea breeze among the mountain peaks. Soon after crossing the ridge, you will be rewarded by a lake which lent its name to Jezersko ('Lakeland'). You will suddenly notice the rocky slopes peeking out from behind the green hills, as if the hills are spread out in front of you, reflecting on the surface of the Planšar Lake. Those who are cycling together can enjoy cycling side-by-side along the ash tree-lined road at the Črna Lake in Preddvor, where you can make a vow of eternal loyalty to each other under the intertwined branches of the treetops. Toast to your love for each other on the terrace of the Bor/Alma Hotel. Lake Bled is a heavenly image of nature and tradition intertwined. It is in the middle of this Alpine lake that Slovenia's only island rises up from above the water. Standing in the courtyard of the island's gothic church, all you can hear is the sound of the wishing bell, which is reputed to make visitors' wishes come true. Leave your bike behind for a while and take a traditional pletna boat to the

island, or walk up to the medieval castle which sits atop a steep rock face. Indulge in a delicious cream cake – a local specialty – and soak up the view. The route will then take you past Kranjska Gora before continuing with a short skip and a hop through Italy. Finally, you will circle back into Austria and finish the route not far from the triple border area, where all of the Karavanke will be within your arm's reach.

KARAVANKE ALPS MOUNTAIN BIKING ACCORDION

MTB adrenaline from Austria to Slovenia

Mount your bike and start your ride uphill on the Slovenian side of the Karavanke. We don't say it out of vanity, but this truly is the sunny side of the Alps. The bike trails here are oriented towards the south, which means the warm sea air from the Adriatic coast makes for an extended season of bike-riding fun. While ascending the mountain ridges of one of the longest mountain ranges in Europe, you will get the best views of the neighboring Julian Alps. You will be able to take in the surrounding peaks, whilst allowing your mind to wander for a 'swim' in the turquoise blue Alpine lakes that lure you to the valleys on both the Austrian and the Slovenian side of the mountains alike. The less crowded slopes are perfect for those with a determined and adventurous spirit. You will be able to catch peaceful sunrises, sunsets, and shooting stars from some of the highest and best-equipped Karavanke mountain shelters. Ride off the Karavanke backbone and take a circular route through the valleys and plateaus beneath the highest peaks of the Julian Alps. In Triglav National Park, every stroke of your pedals will be greeted by Mt. Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain. You will get to know the less crowded paths of the otherwise popular Julian Alps and experience the high-reaching peaks from their scenic foothills.

Uphill to Ridges and Well-Deserved Rewards

From east to west, you will ride up and down bike trails that will make your heart race. On Slovenia's side of the Karavanke, the reward for your efforts will be double, as you will be greeted by the best views of both the Austrian and the Slovenian Alpine world. Your sights will be set on the blue clarity of the lakes on both sides of the mountains. The expansive Austrian lakes with their diverse range of water activities are followed by scenic Slovenian lakes which enchant the soul. Take a break by the waterfalls and springs and let the water tickle your tired feet. Feed off the freshness of the diverse ravines. Catch the spirit of time at abandoned castles, archeological parks, and other relics of past times. Mt. Triglav will proudly stand somewhere in the distance among the Julian peaks and entice you to take a closer look.

Experience the Mountain Tops From Their Foothills

Access Triglav National Park through Krma, one of the three well-known glacial valleys at the foot of Mt. Triglav, and the kingdom of the Goldenhorn chamois that protects Slovenia and the Julian Alps will reveal itself to you. You can have your photo taken with Goldenhorn at Lake Bohinj while relaxing your strained muscles. On the way there, you will pass mountain villages with numerous wooden hayracks that are used for storing and drying hay – an otherwise essential part of romantic rural architecture. You will ascend and descend picturesque mountain passes, and, just when you think there can be no more beautiful views, the Soča Valley opens up in front of you. Those who are enchanted by this emerald river can continue to ride all the way down to its gorge near Tolmin. Zelenci will have a similar effect on you. It is here that the Sava, the longest Slovenian river, springs up from the depths of the blue and green pools of water. Not far from Zelenci be sure to stop off at the cosmopolitan Alpine resort of Kranjska Gora. Keep pedalling and you can even bike up to the triple border area of Slovenia, Austria, and Italy, where you can stand victorious in three countries at the same time.

THE KARAVANKE ALPS HIKING ACCORDION

The panoramic backbone of Austria and Slovenia

Panoramaweg Südalpen, Via Alpina: the Purple Trail, the Slovenian Mountain Trail

The Best Views of the Julian Alps while Yodeling from Klagenfurt to Ljubljana

Grab your hiking poles and venture into the Karavanke Mountains. Being one of the longest mountain ranges in Europe, the Karavanke serve as an extended viewpoint with stunning views of each and every direction from their ridges. The impressively large Alpine lakes are important summer resorts. Thanks to their lower altitude, the Karavanke offer a longer hiking season, which extends into early spring and late autumn. The peaks of the Karavanke are mostly grass-covered and provide a welcome change from the rocky ridges of the Julian Alps. The steeper Austrian slopes together with the gradual Slovenian slopes offer trails just difficult enough to still be able to catch your breath at the top of the mountains. Opt for a loud shout or a playful yodel – either one could reach Klagenfurt in the north or Ljubljana in the south. The mighty peaks of the Julian Alps ruled by Mt. Triglav – Slovenia's pride as well as its highest mountain – dominate the Slovenian side. You will begin to understand why Slovenes obsessively climb this mighty peak each summer. They want to reach the summit which is not only the highest point of Slovenia but also a representation of the three-headed deity and a memory of the country's Slavic ancestors.

The Southern Alps Panorama Trail (Panoramaweg Südalpen)

The Southern Alps Panorama Trail traverses nearly 13,500 meters of elevation gain on its 227-kilometer path. Following the 17 stages of the trail, you can explore the 'Sunny Spot of Southern Carinthia' (Sonnenwinkel Kärntens), which demonstrates its hospitality through year-round sunshine and welcoming people. Grab your hiking poles, put on your backpack, and explore the Rosental Valley, Lake Klopein, and the Lavant Valley.

Via Alpina: The Purple Trail

The Via Alpina route with 66 stages takes you through three countries, Slovenia, Austria, and Germany, and it also crosses the Karavanke on its way. Along the way, you will be enchanted by the white slopes of Mt. Golica, which get their white color when the snow in the mountains has melted and in May its slopes are covered with daffodils – a true sight for hikers' sore eyes. You can also easily reach the summit of Mt. Begunjščica because its accessibility extends over the Karavanke, while in Jezersko your eyes will be drawn to the Planšar Lake before finally continuing across the border into Austria.

The Slovenian Mountain Trail (Slovenska planinska pot)

The most popular connecting trail in Slovenia, the Slovenian Mountain Trail, is not only one of the oldest hiking routes in Europe, but also the world. For nearly seven decades it has connected Slovenia's northeast to its southwest, leading hikers from the Pannonian plains across the Pohorje Hills, the Julian Alps and the Karavanke Mountains all the way to the Adriatic Sea. It lays out all the beauty of the Karavanke in front of you and runs across all their best-known peaks: the elongated Mt. Begunjščica, and Mt. Stol, which is the highest peak of the Karavanke, as well as the daffodil-covered Mt. Golica. The latter even lent its name to the most-played instrumental song in the world. It was produced by the Slovenian Avsenik brothers, who were the first musicians to dream up the sound and the style of the Alpine-inspired Oberkrainer music, which takes on the most beautiful echo right in the midst of the Karavanke.

SCENARIOS OF BRAND AND COMUNICATION PLATFORM DEVELOPMENT

In the strategy (Chapter 2.1.) there are three possible options / scenarios for further development of joint destination management structure of Karavanke region. According to those scenarios we have foreseen three options for development of the brand and communication platform for Karavanke as a region and tourist destination.

SCENARIO 1: Development of the new cross border Karavanke Alps / Karawanken Alps management office

In this scenario all partners on the Slovenian and Austrian side would agree to set up cross border destination and marketing management. The latter would have to guarantee the needed funds for development projects and marketing activities. This would lay the foundations for creation of joint brand Karavanke/Karawanken.

Actions:

- Defining a marketing strategy for the Karavanke/Karawanken Mountains.
- Creation of joint cross – border Karavanke/Karawanken mountains brand (brand identity, logo design).
- Development of communication platform.
- Determination of brand manager (the guardian of the brand).
- Development of marketing communication tools (website, blog, experience map...) .
- Preparation of promotional materials.
- Development of marketing plan for B2C.
- Development of marketing plan for B2B (print, digital, fairs, study tours of journalists, agents).

SCENARIO 2: Extension of existing regional destination management organizations such as the Julian Alps or Geopark Karavanke to the entire Karavanke region

Action:

- New architectural structure of main brand and placement of Karavanke brand or communication in the structure.

SCENARIO 3: Development of joint tourism products and development of management structures around the product activities

Stakeholders (destinations and businesses) included in development of a specific tourist product would form a product cluster based on joint business interests. Each partner would participate its share in the product development and marketing and product cluster would be able to candidate for different funding.

Actions:

- Defining a cluster of product management board for coordinating the marketing activities.
- Defining a strategy for the promotion of the new Karavanke/Karawanken products.
- Integration of Karavanke/Karawanken products into existing marketing strategies of the product cluster stakeholders.
- Integration of the new products in the existing advertising materials of the product cluster stakeholders.

- Communication of Karavanke lead story in all channels of product cluster stakeholders.
- Development of marketing communication tools for products.
- Joint communication of developed products in all channels of stakeholders.
- Development of promotional materials for products (stories, photos, video materials).
- Preparation and implementation of marketing plan.
- Integration into the platform Outdooractive: www.outdooractive.com (own region-page) application Outdooractive (Marketing Tools Analysis, 2018).

A.3 COMPILATION OF A MARKETING PLAN

In April 2019 the MARKETING PLAN HIKING, BIKING, SOFT WINTER as one of planned activities of project Alpe Adria Karavanke/Karawanken was prepared by a project partner Hiking&Biking Slovenia. Meaning the Marketing plan was prepared before this Strategy. Some takeaways from the Marketing strategy are listed below.

SEGMENTS OF HIKERS, BIKERS, SOFT WINTER LOVERS

With the aim to work on marketing activities as efficiently as possible we defined target groups regarding individual products:

HIKING	
Alpine Hiker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoying the nature • Outdoor enthusiast • Interested for advanced tours • Not necessarily high-quality accommodations • Looking for new destinations
'Easy&Joy' hiker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Hiking is a main goal of holidays • Combining hike with cultural, culinary and other experiences • Educated • Walking on normal trails not on hard trails or feratas
Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wide target public • Needed several attractions along the trail: adventure parks, zip-line... • Walking as a family is special adventure • A lot of different information needed
'Ferata' hiker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individuals • Are between climbers and very active hikers
BIKING	
Classic 'tour&trail' biker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enjoying the nature • Mostly mountain bikers • High education skills • 2-3 bike holiday through the year • Looking for new bike destinations • More than half are men bikers
'Easy/joy' biker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mostly mountain bikers • Combining with wellness, culture, culinary • High educated • Lower technical biking skills
'Family biker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pump track or easy trails for children • Child care available • Rent a bike available • High quality standards for accommodations • Longer stay in one destination
'Gravity' bikers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bike downhill, infrastructure needed • Shuttle services available • Bike shops in surroundings

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Younger population • Cheaper accommodations • Shorter stay in destination
Trekking bikers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Looking for long distance trails • Cheaper accommodations, camping • A lot of technical information needed
SOFT WINTER	
Alpine hiker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ski touring, cross country skiing snow shoeing
Easy&joy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • cross country skiing, snow shoeing, sledding
Družine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • sledding, cross country skiing, snow shoeing

MAIN TOURISM MARKETS FOR HIKING, BIKING, SOFT WINTER

HIKING

- Germany– key market with 10 mio hikers, car accessibility, they are looking good value for money, Slovenia is good and close solution as a new destination with developed outdoor products in diverse nature. Big potential of German visitors at Austrian and Slovenian neighbouring lakes.
- Austria – cross border country, car accessibility, they are looking good value for money, Slovenia is good and close solution as a new destination with developed outdoor products in diverse nature.
- United Kingdom– target groups of potential hikers, bikers are already in both cross border countries. Price accessibility.
- Others (Czech, Poland ,Hungary) – growing markets, Karavanke as better alternative for Italian alpine destinations.

BIKING

- Germany – key market with 8 mio bikers, car accessibility, they know exactly what they want, Slovenia is good and close solution as a new destination with developed outdoor products in diverse nature.
- Benelux – visitors are already on both sides of border, they are looking for different kind of accommodations, a lot of trekking bikers
- United Kingdom – 5 mio potential bike visitors
- Austria – cross border destination with good knowledge
- Others (Czech, Poland ,Hungary) – growing markets, Karavanke as alternative to Italian alpine destinations.

SOFT WINTER ACTIVITIES

- Austria – cross border country , great challenge for Karavanke
- Germany – challenge to get more visitors in winter time especially for ski touring and ice climbing
- Others (Czech, Poland ,Hungary) – growing markets also for winter activities

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE MARKETING ACTIVITIES

Development and organization of marketing plan is one of the main activities of the management office of any destinations. Since the management structure of Karavanke region is not yet set up and the form of management is not even agreed on, it is very difficult to set up a marketing plan in the segment of setting up a management structure three different options were proposed:

OPTION 1: Development of new cross border Karavanke management office

In case a new cross border destination office will be developed a revision of existing marketing plan will have to be prepared which would take in to account the number of destinations involved, the available budgets and joint goals of the marketing activities. After the revision of the marketing plan the management office needs to prepare a yearly plan of activities which need to be confirmed by all partners.

OPTION 2: Extension of existing regional destination management organizations such as the Julian Alps or Geopark Karavanke to the entire Karavanke region

In case Karavanke region would join one of the existing regional destination management organizations a joint marketing plan would have to be developed and an agreement of cooperation will have to be developed.

OPTION 3: Development of joint tourism products and development of management structures around the product

In case where we place marketing activities within the product development plan, the responsible organization or partnership structure will set a specific product marketing plan. This was already proposed within each product development activities.

MARKETING ACTIVITIES WHICH WERE CARRIED OUT WITHIN ALPE ADRIA KARAVANKE/KARAWANKEN PROJECT

Ambassador of the Karavanke: 2 ambassadors of the Karavanke were selected and trained. Their task is to promote tourism offer of Karavanke (around 5,000 followers each) by posting cycling, hiking and winter experiences on their FB and Instagram profiles, in the period from 1.8.2020 to 31.7.2021 :

Instagram:

- 2 posts about hiking, biking or winter experiences per month.
- 2 stories on the profile per month.

Facebook:

- 2 posts about hiking, cycling or winter experiences with a link to the FB page of the project;
- 2 stories on the profile per month
- All posts were linked to the FB page: Alpe Adria Karavanke / Karawanken

OUTDOOR ACTIVE: www.outdooractive.com: Promotion of the cross-border region of the Karavanke and tourist products of cycling, hiking and winter experiences on the web portal OUTDOOR ACTIVE: www.outdooractive.com

Mobile application Alpe Adria Karavanke / Karawanken, which will be harmonized with the offer shown on the web portal outdooractive

Promotion of Trans Karavanke: Establishment of cooperation with Julian Alps for marketing of Trans Karavanke.

Reservation system and promotion of the South Panoramic Trail within the Trail Angels Agency: <https://www.trail-angels.com/2020/03/06/neuer-trail-panoramaweg-suedalpen/>

Participation in digital campaigns through Outdoor Slovenia (www.slovenia-outdoor.com) in cooperation with the Slovenian tourist board and Kärnten Werbung and promotion of individual destinations involved in the project through Outdoor Slovenia channel.



4 CONCLUSION

Karavanke mountain range are connecting diverse tourist offer on both sides of the border between Austria and Slovenia. With its unique geographical attributes Karavanke are attracting visitors who seek active holiday away from the crowds with spectacular view. Comparing to neighbouring Julian Alps the tourism offer in Karavanke is less developed, the cooperation between destinations is weaker and there is no active managing structure, which would be responsible for further joint development and marketing.

Karavanke as a region for active holidays have a great potential to form a successful cross border destination, which would be able to position itself on international market. Karavanke can offer a wide variety of outdoor activities with hiking and biking as being the most attractive and best developed. We can already now see a number of successful hiking and biking products being developed with a potential to grow.

Activities in Alpe Adria Karavanke/Karawanken project were focused on a number join actions with the aim to do an important step in cross border cooperation and development. As a result of this project the will to build a management structure which would enable Karavanke region to become a managed tourism destination, grew and set the process for further steps on the way.

Partners of the project agree that Karavanke have a big potential and express the need and willingness to enforce cooperation. However, setting up a join management structure which would be able to take over all necessary activities is still a project for the future. Partners agree that this should be a join goal and priority but the right way and approaches need to be agreed on. For that reason, this strategy proposed to build a functional management structure around each identifies tourism product. Product management can work as un-formal institution, based on joint business interests to further develop, promote and sell experiences of Karavanke. Once such product management formations are becoming successful the opportunities to develop a join destination management structure will be easier to carry out.

