

Slovenia

IN AUTUMN

19th - 26^h October, 2024
seven nights, £2750

FOOD AND
PHOTOGRAPHY
RETREATS

with the Pennines



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THE RETREAT

FOOD AND PHOTOGRAPHY RETREATS are for people who enjoy a house-party style of holiday in a lovely setting where they can immerse themselves totally in photography, mix with like-minded guests, and eat very well too. We're free of the restrictions of hotels and work mealtimes around photography, rather than vice-versa. If you're weary of being herded from one "photo-opportunity" to another and want the time and space to make your own work, then our Retreats are for you.

We're excited to return to the Bohinj region of Slovenia after a hiatus caused by the pandemic. And we are visiting at this lovely country at its most colourful time of year - peak autumn - with the promise of misty sunrises and russet woodlands. We concentrate on getting you to the best places at just the right time and will return to them, sometimes several times, to allow you to refine your pictures. Based in Ribčev Laz on the shores of Lake Bohinj, we are ideally positioned, with the turquoise river of the Mostnica Gorge minutes away and the charming old villages of Stara Fužina, Srednja Vas and Koprivnik, nearby.

We prefer you to be behind your camera rather than sitting in a minibus for hours, so the furthest we will drive, on just a couple of days, is about one hour thirty minutes from base.

We'll make time too to give you constructive feed-back on your pictures—all the more useful when we've been side-by-side in the field.



WHAT'S ON OFFER

IF YOU'RE INTERESTED in learning one of the particular skills Niall is known for (including field studio photography, "Colour Transects" or "Chocolate Bars"), take an eLearning class before the Retreat and have a chance to practise what you've learned in the field with him. During the Retreat, Niall will suggest and demonstrate edits on some of your photographs. Locations we will work will include:

- Around Lake Bled, including the high-level over-look of the Church of the Assumption
- Mostnica Gorge, with the river and carved sandstone features, as well as its turquoise water
- Slap Peričnik waterfalls.
- Overview of our "home valley" from Koprivnik
- St Primoz church and views of the valleys around Jamnik
- The old iron town of Kropa
- The colourful mediaeval town of Radovljica
- The Sava valley, including the Zelenci Nature Reserve with its spring-fed emerald-green lake.



ACCOMMODATION AND MEALS

Our base is on the outskirts of the village of Ribcev Laz, about 10 minute's walk from the shores of Lake Bohinj (pronounced "bor-heen"). The comfortable, modern rooms each have their own bathroom and we eat together and discuss our pictures in the dining room downstairs. There is also a sauna for our use; it's very relaxing after a day behind the camera. Should you need any supplies during the week, there are well-stocked stores in the village and we will pass larger supermarkets during our travels.

Meals

Good food is at the heart of our Retreats, from breakfast through to after-dinner chocolates, all made by Charlotte. She uses local ingredients, when they are available, in dishes that are delicious and imaginative without being fussy. And that goes for vegetarian options too—often enjoyed by guests who are not normally vegetarian. Food allergies and intolerances are catered for sensitively when notified in advance on the booking form.

Over the years, we have become adept at timing meals around the best times for photography—without neglecting your stomachs! With sunrise at about 07:10 during our Retreat, Charlotte may bring breakfast to us if we're a distance from home.





LAKE BOHINJ REGION

WE LIKE IT WHEN VISITORS come to Slovenia with no pre-conceptions; they are always pleasantly surprised. Yes, the country is beautiful in an obvious way, with jagged alpine peaks weathered from dazzling limestone, orderly foggy forests, elegant churches perched ostentatiously on hill-tops and turquoise rivers flowing through sculpted canyons. But for the photographer, there is so much more in the details, the threads of the landscape tapestry, to delight and hold our attention. It's a landscape where tradition and modernity meet, where there is pride in one and restraint in the other. You'll see no clear-fells here, no litter and you'll enjoy being in a modern European state that values its wild nature.

Neatly arranged at the eastern end of Lake Bohinj, Ribcev Laz is thronged with tourists in summer. By the time we arrive, though, the crowds have dispersed, leaving us to roam the ravines and silent beech forests around the Lake in peace. It is an ideal base from which to explore the Julian Alps. Beyond this region, our most distant locations are: Jamnik, just 70 minutes from home and an early morning drive to witness sunrise on St Primoz Church (cover); Kranjska Gora, 80 minutes away; and that iconic Slovenian location, The Church of the Assumption, on Lake Bled, only 30 minutes away.

Slovenia's highest peak, Triglav (2864 m), is the centre-piece of an upland ecosystem that encompasses alpine lakes, peat bogs, mixed forests (dominated by larch,



beech and Norway spruce). This is where the early frosts visit and colours turn first.

Down in the valley, Ribcev Laz's neighbouring villages are undergoing a steady process of "gentrification" as the area prospers. Nevertheless they manage to retain a charm that binds them firmly into the cross-border Alpine tradition - people take a scythe out of their BMW to cut grass to feed to the goats that winter under their house. The country's Roman Catholic heritage is expressed in numerous shrine and deeply-photogenic hill-top churches and the irrepressibly cheery accordion music played in every restaurant expresses a still-active and lively folk culture.

We love visiting some of the old towns in the region, too, where fading plaster work hints at the magnificence of another era when Slovenia, or more accurately, the Slovene lands, formed part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire and before that, the Illyrian Provinces - a self-governing province of Napoleon's French Empire.

Many Slovenians take part in outdoor sports so the quality and provision of trails is outstanding, as well as sensitive to the environment. And they are their for us to use and enjoy, too.

Left
Radovljica centre. Of the various old towns we've visited in north western Slovenia, this is our favourite.

Centre
Maize stored for the winter in an old barn.

Right
The brightly-painted buildings of Kropa belie the incredibly hard, short lives of the ironworkers of the past who lived there.



Price: GBP 2750, 19 - 26th October 2024

What's included:

- 7 nights accommodation in Ribcev Laz
- Transfers from and to Ljubljana Airport at a pre-arranged time
- Transport during the Retreat
- All meals during the Retreat from dinner on Saturday 19th October until breakfast on Saturday 26th October, 2024
- Tuition from Niall.

What's not included:

- Your travel to and from Ljubljana
- Alcoholic drinks
- Travel insurance
- Admissions
- Online learning before the Retreat.

Travelling to and from the Retreat

There are daily flights to and from London, as well as main European cities. Direct flights are a bit more expensive than those with a changeover but have less scope for problems with luggage transfers. We collect you from the front door of the Jože Pučnik Airport (LJU), outside Ljubljana. The Retreat starts with dinner on the 19th and finishes after breakfast on the 26th at which point we return you to the airport. Rooms need to be vacated by 10:00.

Where we will go

We've detailed earlier in this brochure some of the locations we have available to choose from. We avoid hopping from location to location, preferring instead to work a good one thoroughly and give it the time it deserves. Good photography is often more time than location dependent and locations often deserve a second visit to refine what you did the first time.

The daily routine

Whatever we are shooting, it tends

to look more attractive in the early morning or late afternoon when low-angled light shows relief and colours better. With dawn at around 07:10 and dusk around 16:30, it's not an especially long working day. Regardless, we'll make sure you have time to download your pictures and rest if you need to. Sometimes we'll eat breakfast in, sometimes we'll take it with us to eat in the field, depending on how far we are from our base at the time.

The plan for the next day is published at dinner, outlining the weather forecast, the locations and ideas for the next day, drive times, walking distances, where and when we'll eat and what gear you'll probably need. Experience has taught that it's more productive—and satisfactory for you—to have a plan to follow than make things up as we go along.

We've learned over the years, too, just how much guests value being able to discuss the work they are creating, with Niall and other guests

and to this end, we'd urge you to bring a laptop. We set up a Zoom meeting within the meetingroom which makes it much easier for everyone to follow Niall and to share your pictures. While the emphasis is on review, Niall will advise on post-production too. We have a follow up Zoom meeting a couple of weeks after the Retreat to give you time to prepare your favourite pictures from the trip.

Safety

We take your safety seriously during our Retreats. At locations with known risks—such as drop-offs, tree-roots, thin ice, busy roads etc.—we will draw your attention to them before we leave the vehicle. Thereafter, you are responsible for your own safety. We provide guests with a hi-vis. vest to attach to their camera pack; it makes you, and it, easier to locate. We also issue guests with a two-way radio in order that we all may keep in touch in town or in other areas where the group scatters. This also makes it easier to access help or guidance

from Niall. We do not recommend leaving any equipment in our vehicle overnight. We can accommodate various levels of fitness, and most of our photography will be done within a few hundred yards of our vehicle.

COVID

At the time of writing, the threat from COVID has receded. Nevertheless, if there is a resurgence, we will require guests to conform to the statutory guidelines pertaining at the time.

Spending money

Slovenia is in the Eurozone and you can withdraw cash in the village.

Insurance

It is a requirement of booking that guests provide evidence of personal travel insurance to cover cancellation and curtailment, medical and emergency expenses (including repatriation), personal accident, injury and death in addition to loss of/damage to luggage and posses-

sions, personal possessions and flight cancellations/ delays.

Passport and visa requirements

A passport valid for at least six months beyond the length of the stay is required for non-UK visitors. The passport should not have been issued more than 10 years before the date of your departure. You should check your insurance in respect of COVID-related claims.

Language

Slovenian is the indigenous language. English is widely spoken, including by the Slovenian owner of our guesthouse.

Climate

Typically, the early mornings in late October are chilly while the daytime temperature may rise into the mid or high teens (°C). Previous experience suggests that we can expect a good amount of settled weather.

Clothing

Prepare for cold weather - but also for it becoming warmer during the

day. You should have: proper walking boots; waterproof trousers; a waterproof shell; a down jacket or fleeces; and thermals. A windproof hat and fold-down mitt/ liners combination will keep head and hands warm first thing in the morning. If you suffer from the cold, pack some HotHands® hand warmers too. You may want something smarter to wear in the evenings. We ask that guests wear slippers or indoor shoes at the accommodation.

Equipment

If you are travelling by air, you may be concerned about carry-on luggage restrictions. The way round this Niall has used for many years is to pack as much gear as you reasonably can into a photographer's waistcoat. This counts as a garment, not hand luggage, and you can still take your carry-on allowance in to the cabin. Equipment you'll need during the Retreat:

- If possible, please bring a laptop with Lightroom/PS or Affinity Photo

- You could use any lens between 16 mm and 500 mm but a macro lens, a mid-range zoom and a moderate wide-angle will get most use
- You'll need a tripod, especially for work at dusk or dawn
- Please pack a head torch, for safety and navigation
- A walking pole or staff is useful on slopes. Sometimes in these conditions, if the choice is between having a tripod or being able to use poles, the latter is the smart move
- Bring all the chargers, cards, batteries and backup media you need, plus a European power adaptor if you're travelling from outside Europe
- A polarizing filter (technology has largely rendered graduated ND filters obsolete)
- Hand warmers—which also help to prolong your battery's life.

About us

After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad, Charlotte and Niall Benvie established Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. After many years leading tours and workshops for other companies at home and abroad, Niall and Charlotte Benvie established Food and Photography Retreats in 2018. Our offer combines cultivating your photography in attractive locations with great hospitality, conversation and food.

Niall has been a professional photographer, writer designer and guide for 30 years with a massive publication record including six books and hundreds of articles. He has been involved in founding and running several of the biggest outdoor photographic initiatives of the last decade, including Meet Your Neighbours, Wild Wonders of Europe and 2020VISION and is widely recognised for the innovative nature of his work– and capacity for re-invention.

For 28 years, **Charlotte** combined a career in the Civil Service with freelance catering and hosting roles before coming to work with husband, Niall. Guests value not only her expertise in the kitchen and dining room but her attention to detail and warmth. She has a keen eye for a picture too and can also assist with Lightroom processing. She is a trained chocolatiere.

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