

1 CIRCUIT OF LAKE BLED



See also photograph page 16

Distance/time: 6.5km/4mi;
2h10min

Grade: an easy stroll except for the climb up to the viewpoint
Equipment: see page 38; walking shoes. Refreshments available at several places around Lake Bled
How to get there: or to Bled
Nearest accommodation: Bled

Just as every Slovenian should climb Triglav if he is a true patriot, so should every visitor take this classic walk. This is one of the most beautiful lakes in the world — a magnet for poets, artists and lovers as well as those people who live too hectic a life. Absorb the timeless beauty, the ever-changing light playing on the water, and the tranquillity of an easy, gentle stroll that relaxes the mind and soothes the soul. Tip: this walk is no secret, and on a lovely summer's day literally hundreds of people will make the circuit. So get up early, see the sunrise, and have it all to yourselves.

Start out from the SKB BANKA BUILDING in Bled: cross LJUBLJANSKA CESTA, go down the steps opposite, and turn right along SVOBODE CESTA. After a few metres you pass the TOURIST INFORMATION CENTRE and the CASINO on your left. Descend the steps to the right of the tall sign for the casino. Follow the shore path to the right

(anticlockwise) through the park, towards the steep cliffs on which Bled Castle is perched. The starting positions and lanes for the rowing competitions stretch out across **Lake Bled** from here, and it is lovely to sit and watch the rowers (Picnic 1). Soon you pass a JETTY where you could board a *pletna* (Slovenian-style gondola) to visit the island of Otok and the Church of the Assumption. On reaching a SWIMMING POOL and boat rental complex (9min), go up the path to the right, to an asphalt road (with restricted access for cars). Directly opposite is a signposted path to Bled Castle (12min). Turn left along the road, walking under chestnut trees and passing two rather grand houses. The first belongs to the Triglav National Park, the second is a private house called ZLATOROG VILLA (18min), with that famous chamois on the front (see box on page 21).

Lake Bled: view to the castle from the town, with a pletna in the foreground



The island of Otok, with the Church of the Assumption, and Bled Castle, from the Osojnica viewpoint (Picnic 2a)

In another nine minutes you cross a little bridge just before the ROWING CENTRE. The path goes in front of the buildings and by the statue of a rower. Continue through the shady trees to pass the rowers' finishing line and grandstand. You are now at the far end of the lake, where there is a grassy picnic area and opposite, a shop, bar, ice cream stall and CAMPSITE (37min).

Keep along the shore (perhaps stopping to hire a rowing boat), to come to a few wooden steps. This is the start of a boardwalk that offers marvellous views across to Otok and Bled. Back on the path beside the road, you reach the entrance to the PENSION BOMI (46min). Take the path (beside a bench) signposted 'OSOJNICA'; it climbs behind the pension and up the steep wooded hillside to two fine viewpoints overlooking Lake Bled and the surrounding mountains. It is steep, and near the top there is a flight of metal steps that climb at a dizzying angle to the first viewpoint. The second, and we think better, VIEWPOINT is only

a few minutes further up through the trees (1h15min; Picnic 2a). Return to the road (1h40min) and continue around the lake, passing our favourite lakeside viewpoint, just where the path leaves the road. A perfectly-situated 'LOVERS SEAT' looks out over the lake towards Otok and the castle (Picnic 2b). Soon you go through a gateway in a high wall and, where the path narrows, you will encounter artists offering their work for sale (but they do not hassle you). You pass the lakeside entrance to Vila Bled and carry on through another gateway to reach the busy village of Mlino (1h55min). The many *pletnas* here make this a colourful scene.

The path now follows the road closely all the way back to Bled, passing several viewpoints. By the GRAND HOTEL TOPLICE fork left, to take the path in front of the hotel and complete your circuit of the lake. Steps either side of the CASINO will lead you back to your starting point in Bled (2h10min).