



JULIANA TRAIL EXPEDITION 2023 REPORT

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1. Introduction

1.1. Overview

The Juliana Trail is a 270-kilometre hiking route that encircles Triglav National Park in the Slovenian Julian Alps, which we completed, with some adaptations (including summiting Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain at 2,864m) over 17 days in August 2023. The alpine terrain made a suitable challenge for what was, for most of the team, our first long-distance hike, allowing us to appreciate the wealth of history, culture and landscapes of the region while allowing us to retain the security of never being too remote or isolated. We all developed our outdoor skills and learnt a lot, particularly from our few days in the mountains, where we enjoyed exposed and technical hiking and via ferrata that was at times closer to climbing, giving us a taste of what future more challenging expeditions could entail.

As an all-female team we feel passionate about encouraging other women to undertake expeditions such as this. We feel it is important to highlight some of the things that are specific to being female on an expedition, such as increased vulnerability and managing menstruation, but that though they require consideration, these should not be things that hold us back from adventure/outdoor activities. Representation is invaluable to getting more women into outdoor spaces, by demonstrating that it is accessible. As a group we have been keen to promote the Exploration Board to similarly outdoor-minded women, and hope that this report will also be an agent in doing so.

We are also very conscious of minimising our environmental impact and this was an integral part of our expedition and ethos. We sought to have as minimal an environmental impact as was feasible, and while flying would ideally have been avoided altogether, those of us who had the time and ability travelled overland via bus. While on the trail we were very conscious of leaving no trace and respected the disallowment of wild camping within Triglav National Park.

Aims

Outlined below are the main aims we had going into our expedition and what we hoped to gain from completing them.

1. To safely hike the Juliana Trail.
 - Developing our skills and confidence in long-distance hiking, navigation and wild camping.
 - Have fun while doing so, and develop our resilience and teamwork.
2. To document the realities of our journey, the area, trail, landscape, culture, people, history etc, through a documentary and our post-expedition report
 - Encouraging further exploration and expeditions, and promoting the Exploration Board, especially to women.
3. To minimise environmental impact, in line with the intentions of the trail to promote sustainable tourism.
 - In particular by travelling overland.
 - Ensuring only footprints, and no litter is left behind.
 - Encouraging others to do the same by documenting the natural beauty of the area and the possibility of travelling with minimum impact.

Our aims were achieved - we developed our outdoor skills, teamwork, and resilience, and all completed the entire trail with the exception of Alisha, who had the maturity to recognise that

continuing while suffering with prior health conditions would, past a point, only end up being detrimental. This was something that we were all able to learn from. We all pushed ourselves but retained high morale and had a really enjoyable trip.

1.2 The Area

The Balkan region of Eastern Europe is remarkably diverse – culturally; the native Illyrians having experienced Hellenistic, Roman and Ottoman influence at different times, in addition to geographically, biologically and historically. The recent history of the region has been tumultuous: from the Balkan Wars and WW1 in the early 20th Century to the dissolution of Yugoslavia from around 1990, at which point Slovenia declared independence. These are some of the youngest countries in the world, and shadows of the recent instability still persist, though less so in Slovenia than some of the other Balkan countries. Alisha, who travelled to the region last summer, was especially fascinated with the politics and social impact that succeeded such tensions and is eager to more deeply observe the dynamics and perspectives of those native to the region. Such rich history has resulted in a culture that is an amalgamation of differing influences, but a simultaneously strong sense of Slovenian national identity. There remain differences within the country, but in Slovenia the primary language is Slovenian and the primary religion Catholicism.

Geographically, the region is characterised by mountain ranges. The Juliana Trail circles Triglav National Park, which encompasses the limestone Julian Alps including Mt Triglav, Slovenia's highest peak at 2,864m. It's the country's only national park, spanning around 840 square km and established in 1924 to preserve the region's unique natural and cultural heritage. Its diverse landscape of rugged mountains, glacial valleys, pristine lakes, and dense forests provides a sanctuary for a wide range of plant and animal species. Symbolically representing Slovenian national identity, Triglav National Park is not only a place of breathtaking beauty but also a testament to the country's unity and resilience.



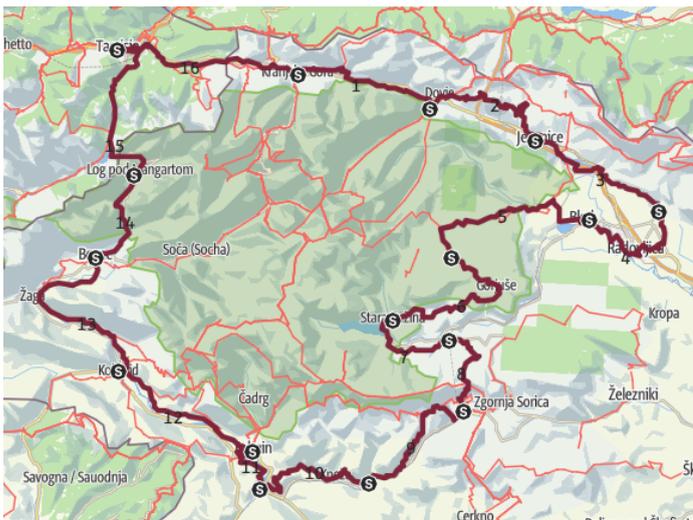
1.3 The Route



The 270km Juliana Trail is split into 16 sections, which we initially aimed to follow roughly day by day, starting at Lake Bled for its accessibility from Ljubljana, and hiking in the typical clockwise direction.

However, as we planned in more detail, we decided to adapt the route to better suit what we wanted from our trip, and adding an extra dimension of challenge by cutting into the mountains for a few days, and summiting Triglav.

Below shows the traditional juliana trail route (left), and our adapted route (right). Shown in orange are sections we completed via bus.



1.4 Expedition Team

Sophia Marr

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MSci Geophysics, 2nd year

Age: 21

Experience:

- April-May 2021: Solo thru-hike of 630-mile South West Coast Path (40 days, total elevation gain 4x height of Everest). Gained extensive experience of (self-organised, unsupported) multi-day hiking and wild-camping, across/through diverse terrains and conditions. Refined navigation skills and ability to assess risk and make safe decisions - especially pertinent as a solo female.
- August 2022: thru-hike of Hebridean Way (150 miles).
- 2018-19: Gold DofE, including leading my team on a 10-day hiking expedition in the High Atlas mountains, Morocco, and submitting Mt Toubkal (4167m).
- 2019: 45-mile Ten Tors (A gruelling 30-odd-hour event tramping across Dartmoor, 6th out of ~200 teams).
- Summer 2021: 3 months' solo travel in Central America, as well as Albania - including hiking such as to the summit of Volcan Acatenango (3976m) and Theth-Valbona hike.
- Numerous multi-day hiking/camping trips in Dartmoor, Exmoor, Brecon Beacons, Peak District, South Downs, regular running including two half-marathons.
- 2022: Geological fieldwork experience, including mapping a ~7km² area in southern Spain - lots of hiking in the sun and determining locations.
- 2021-23: Active member of ICMC; indoor bouldering up to V5, top-rope and lead (6b+), some growing experience outdoor trad climbing in Peak District.
- General fitness maintained by climbing 3x, and running and swimming 1-2x per week as well as daily cycling.
- March 2022: Marlin Level 3 Fieldwork First Aid course certification; valid for 3 years.

Eleanor Parker (Ella)

ella.parker22@imperial.ac.uk

iBSc Biomedical Engineering at Imperial (Currently), MBBS Medicine at King's College London

Age: 21

Experience:

- November 2022-Present: Training for a marathon (April 2023), running 3-4x per week, which has in itself improved my organisation in needing to fit in multiple long runs per week. I am also looking at doing more trail half marathons before the expedition.
- October 22-Present: Member of ICMC, bouldering 1-2x/week
- August 2019: 4 days hiking in Glencoe, Scotland, this allowed me to develop my navigation skills and attempt some more technical hikes in and around the area.
- March 2019: Gold DofE 5 day hike in North York Moors, developed navigational skills and route planning.
- Lots of experience day hiking in Yorkshire and Lake District, generally inexperienced in prolonged multi-day hikes.

- Experience in first aid and basic life support through medical degree and A&E mentorship. Experience in minor procedures such as suturing and wound care

Elen Edwards

elen.edwards21@imperial.ac.uk

BSc Biochemistry, 2nd year

Age: 21

Experience:

- Much hiking, scrambling and navigating experience in British national parks, especially in Snowdonia National Park. Completed many solo and group single day and multi day hikes in Snowdonia National Park, in varying conditions; from heat wave, to snow to low visibility.
- August 2022: Completed the Welsh 3000s/15 Peaks challenge; 50km route with an elevation gain close to 4000m over 3 days, camping between each state and carrying possessions.
- August 2021: Completed the Yorkshire 3 peaks challenge; 40km round hike with 1585m elevation in 12 hours.
- 2021-2023: An active member of ICMC with bouldering, top rope and lead experience. Up to V5 climbing ability.
- Run multiple 10km races, and currently in training for a half marathon.
- General fitness from swimming regularly after having swam competitively at regional level for many years. By now have completed many long distance wild swims, including the length of Bala Lake (6km).
- July 2022: Volunteered in Poland at a Ukrainian refugee camp for 2 weeks.

Alisha Oner

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BSc Medical Biosciences, 2nd year

Age: 20

Experience:

- September 2022: Attended Drill and Chill 2022 which involved daily hikes to various crags. Many of the trails were unmarked, enabling me to refine my navigation skills.
- March 2022: 4 days of hiking and climbing in Fontainebleau, France. The weather was particularly bad during this trip meaning I have experience camping in less-than-ideal conditions.
- 2020-present: Avid climber (v5 boulder, 6b lead/top-rope) with both indoor and outdoor experience. The latter has provided me with many skills relevant to this expedition such as how to pack in an organised and light manner (given the space and weight climbing equipment takes) and keeping calm in high stress environments. Active member of ICMC.
- 2015-2017: Completed Duke of Edinburgh bronze and silver. For both these expeditions I was lead navigator making me comfortable with a map and compass. Provided me with valuable experience working in a team and particularly helped my conflict resolution skills.

- Have been on many multi-/ day hikes throughout England, including various walks in the peak district and lake district. I am comfortable walking long distances and on steep terrain though excited to challenge myself with such a prolonged period of hiking.

Hana Biblekaj

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International Relations (University of Edinburgh), 2nd year.

Age: 20

Experience:

- July 2022: A 4 night, 5 day hiking and camping expedition along the ‘Tour Des Aiguilles Rouges’ route in the Chamonix valley. As my first hike of such intensity, I picked up valuable skills here. I learnt how to pack efficiently, carrying a 65-litre backpack for the whole trip containing everything we might have needed in the 5 days and how to distribute the weight of things within the backpack itself as well as between friends. I further learnt how to think on the spot if something on our route did not go to plan – such as finding out that the refuge we planned to stay in did not have room for us, which further impacted on our food levels as we thought we could also eat there. Here I also refined previous navigation skills, depending wholly on the two maps we had as our phones did not have service and the markings on the route itself were not trustworthy.
- 2021- present: A committed climber; training and climbing indoors 3-4x a week and am keen to develop my physical strength through targeted training (on a training plan from the app ‘crimped’). I have experience in walking and bouldering in Edinburgh’s local crags as well as local hills and mountains. I am also a member of the Mountaineering Society at the University of Edinburgh.
- Jan 2023: ‘Menstruation in the Mountains’ talk with the mountaineering society which taught me valuable lessons for how to manage hormones, cramps and comfortability whilst hiking/ climbing while menstruating.
- 2015-2017: Completed DofE Bronze and Silver where I learnt how to manage tensions in a group and work within a team in unstable conditions, basic navigation skills using a map and compass, what to expect when you are in a situation where you cannot control everything and planning routes alongside risk management.
- Familiar with the Balkans area, being from Kosovo, and fluent in Albanian, having also grown up hearing Serbo-Croat; language skills which will likely be incredibly useful on the expedition.

Lucia Necchi

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MEng Electrical and Information Engineering, 3rd year.

Age: 21

Experience:

- August 2018: hiked a portion of the Alta Via 1 in Valle d’Aosta (from Rey to Gressoney St Jean) for a total of around 6000m of positive elevation gain over 8 days. Proved to be a very formative experience in particular for what concerns meal planning, as the route is all quite high up and remote so restocking is not very easy.

- December 2019: multiple day-hikes in Jasper National Park (British Columbia). Very challenging experience as most of the hikes involved walking on packed snow and one of them required doing some passages on a frozen river.
- January 2020: ski touring on the Monte Rosa massif. Gained significant orientation experience as navigating in snow is made much more difficult by the homogeneity of landscapes.
- Summer 2021: several 1/2/3 day hikes around the Gressoney valley across the summer. These hikes were mainly useful for getting used to sleeping and retaining physical performance above 3000m of elevation, which had previously been problematic for me.
- April 2023: hiked the Alta Via dei Monti Lattari, near Naples. The route wasn't particularly challenging in terms of daily kms or elevation gain but it had some more technical/scrambly sections which were made significantly more challenging by some bad weather (mainly dense fog and showers).
- 15+ years in the scouts. Extensive experience with camping and building emergency shelters.



2 Expedition Details

2.1 Itinerary

Date	What	Start	End	Distance walked (km)	Elevation gain (m)
9-Aug	Preparation, Travel	London	Bus		
10-Aug	Travel	Bus	Bus		
11-Aug	Travel, preparation	Ljubljana	Ljubljana		
12-Aug	Travel, preparation	Ljubljana	Bled		
13-Aug	Hike Day 1	Bled	Koča na Lipanci	20.7	1207
14-Aug	Hike Day 2	Koča na Lipanci	Ribčev Laz	28.8	254
15-Aug	Hike Day 3	Bohinj Bistrica	Ribčev Laz	10.1	279
16-Aug	Hike Day 4	Bohinj Bistrica	Camp Sorli	24.3	1865
17-Aug	Hike Day 5	Camp Sorli	Camp Labrca	24.6	1131
18-Aug	Rest day (Day 6)	Camp Labrca	Tolmin	2	
19-Aug	Hike Day 7	Tolmin	Kobarid	16.2	162
20-Aug	Hike Day 8	Kobarid	Bovec	20.3	490
21-Aug	Hike Day 9	Bovec	Lago del Predil	17.8	938
22-Aug	Hike Day 10	Lago del Predil	Laghi di Fusine	14	345
23-Aug	Hike Day 11	Laghi di Fusine	Erjavčeva Koča (EE, H, L)	14.6	1100
23-Aug	Hike Day 11	Laghi di Fusine	Dom Tamar (EP, S)	9.7	950
24-Aug	Hike Day 12	Erjavčeva Koča/Dom Tamar	Aljazev Dom	~13.3	985
25-Aug	Rest Day (Day 13)	Aljazev Dom	Aljazev Dom	1	
26-Aug	Hike Day 14	Aljazev Dom (TRIGLAV DAY)	Mojstrana	13.4	2074
27-Aug	Hike Day 15	Mojstrana	Lipce	14	5
28-Aug	Hike Day 16	Lipce	Camp Sobec	22	529
29-Aug	Hike Day 17	Camp Sobec	Bled	4.2	91
30-Sep	Travel				
			TOTAL	271	12,405
			AVERAGE (over 15 days)	18	827

Our itinerary (above) ultimately followed our plan, more or less. We used the stages of the trail as a starting point for our own structure, but adapted start/end points based on campsite/mountain hut locations. Wild camping is not allowed in Slovenia - therefore we stayed the majority of nights in campsites, a few in mountain huts, and 2 nights wild camping while we passed through Italy. We had the idea of asking the permission of farmers to camp on their land - but soon realised that this likely would not be reliable and so ended up planning our stages from campsite to campsite. We were able to walk into most campsites without having booked which afforded us an element of flexibility, though campsite density was not high enough to be really flexible - we did have to essentially cover the planned distance each day. This is where wild camping would have been advantageous.

2.2 Trip Diary

9/8/23

A last minute gear sort (read: a complete takeover of Sophia's living room by tents, stoves, bags, and food) made the expedition suddenly seem very real and got our excitement raring. It ended up being a tumultuous afternoon as we encountered some last-minute hiccups, but things were soon back in order (of sorts). Those of us taking the bus steeled ourselves at the prospect of the next 36 hours, suddenly questioning our environmental integrity. But with our 11pm departure from Victoria, we were off. The night was restless and full of interruptions - from border control to ferry crossings - but a little sleep was snatched.

10/8/23

We awoke as the bus pulled into Paris the next morning, where we spent half the day in pack weight acclimatisation mode as we carted our backpacks through the city, probably knocking down a few tourists in our path. We grasped at the opportunity (rapidly dwindling) to be somewhat civilised and passed a couple of hours in a Parisian cafe, before wandering past the Notre Dame and back along the Seine in time for our next bus. The remainder of the day/night was spent reading, knitting, napping, and shifting uncomfortably in our seats.

11/8/23

We made it to Ljubljana in the morning, where we had a much-needed shower before heading out to explore the city, equipped with an extensive list of recommendations from our Slovenian friends. A whistlestop tour of the main tourist sites later, we met Elen as she got in from the airport before a dinner of burek (the first of many) and cheap drinks in a student bar - our first (of many) Slovenian beer samplings.



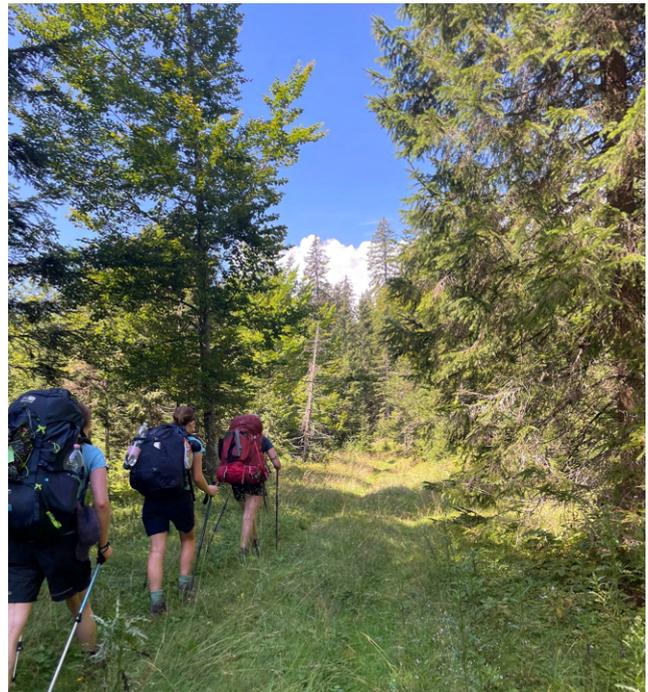
12/8/23

Ella joined us early the next morning straight off a bus from Croatia, and, finally all united, we spent the morning touring Ljubljana's outdoor shops for maps, gas, and a few other last-minute gear items, before taking the bus up to Bled; the journey offering us our first glimpse of the mountains. Once in Bled we did a colossal food shop (a combination of Sundays, public holidays, and the route meant that we would not pass an open shop for the next 5 days) and promptly began despairing as to how we could possibly carry it all. After wrestling with our bags we went to the lake for a swim (again, first of many), had a good carbo-load of a dinner, along with our last vegetables for a while, and headed to bed for an early night.

13/8/23

DAY 1: Bled to Koca na Lipanci, 20.7km, 1207m elev

Awoken by a 5:30 alarm in an attempt (key word being attempt) to beat the heat, we soon set off after a questionable breakfast of bread, plum jam and noodles. We climbed steadily (and sweatily) up above the lake, through smaller and smaller villages, until we found ourselves finally on the trail proper - forested, therefore thankfully somewhat sheltered from the sun, and steep. With our heavy loads - 5 days worth of food - we were rapidly awakened to the blessing of the trekking pole. The gradient of the slope increased exponentially until the final near-vertical couple of kilometres up to the mountain hut, which we were herded up by approaching thunder, getting caught on the receiving end of a downpour with a couple of hundred metres to go.



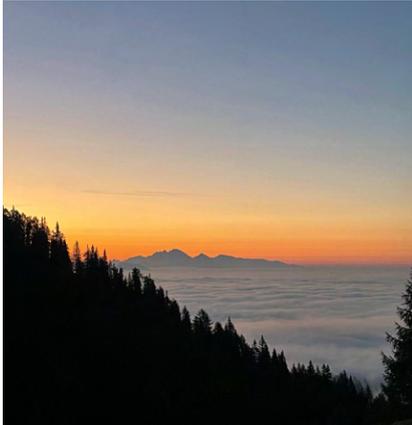
This first evening on the trail was spent sharing card games; Cabo was quickly established as a fixture of the trip, and our first meal of lentils and couscous proved equally successful. More upsettingly, we learnt that camping outside mountain huts would not be a viable option and reluctantly paid the extortionate fee to stay inside.

14/8/23

DAY 2: Koca na Lipanci to Ribcev Laz, 28.8km, 254m elev

Stumbling out of the mountain hut early and as quietly as we could in an attempt to minimise damages to the sleep of others, we were confronted by a vast cloud-ocean rolling out below us, and sky alit with colour. Our first morning view of the trail rendered us pretty decidedly breathless. So did our porridge - but that was more to do with its reminiscence of slowly-setting concrete. The excitement of our sunrise cloud inversion meant we started the day in high spirits, and these somehow pervaded despite the steep, technical (slow) descent. It was damp and eerie as we descended through the cloud and dewy spiderwebs, and we passed many locals foraging beneath the trees for mushrooms and blueberries to laden their baskets. We happily gorged ourselves on blueberries too (didn't dare risk the mushrooms). After a long morning we were spat out of the welcome shelter of the trees and onto the road in the beating sun for the last stretch to Lake Bohinj. With minutes to spare, we managed to meet the (free!) bus that ran

along the shore of the lake to the campsite, saving us 3km off-route. We were deposited at an oasis of a campsite, and swiftly threw ourselves into the coolness of the lake.



15/8/23

DAY 3: Bohinj Bistrica to Ribčev Laz, 10.1km, 279m elev

Really enjoying the chaotic lakeside amalgam of tents and tree roots at this campsite, and having childhood excitement reawakened by its reminiscence of the Parent Trap, we decided to stay another night (note: the bar was definitely not a deciding factor). A conveniently-situated bus line meant that we were able to bus to the end of the stage and walk it backwards. Carrying only one pack between us, we were practically flying along this shorter stretch. With plenty of time, we decided to take a detour up to a waterfall - a route which took us along the banks of the icy river and meant we had basically no rational choice but to take 3 separate chunky dunks (a dip approximately every 15 minutes meant that we probably spent as much time dressing and undressing as we did walking), which made for a very enjoyable day. Naturally, we ended the day with one last swim in the lake, but not before discovering that the sole of Ella's boot had almost fully detached...

16/8/23

DAY 4: Bohinj Bistrica to Camp Sorli, 24.3km, 1865m elev

Sad to finally leave Camp Bohinj, we started the day with a trip to a fortuitously situated outdoor shop for Ella to get some new trail runners. We then split up - Ella (wasting no time putting her new shoes to the test) and Sophia showed their masochistic side for the first time, deciding that it was a shame that the trail passed over the ridge without taking in the peak and that this would be an excellent chance to claim the first (if small) summit of the trip (Crna Prst, 1844m).

The others made the sage decision not to completely wear out their legs with a monster of a day, and opted to take the train through the mountain to Podbrdo and walk the latter half of the stage (17km or so). Their more leisurely day was spent making trail friends and then sitting in the campsite for multiple rounds of beer and Cabo.

Meanwhile, Ella and Sophia spent all morning trudging up the mountain, gaining 1500m of elevation. Sophia realised halfway up that the reason her pack was so heavy was because she had unknowingly been carrying 5l of water, but after a quick calculation concluded that her sweat rate was such that even 5l would not be enough to fully rehydrate. Electrolytes were taken with alarming frequency, and both of us began to recognise glaring signs of a nascent addiction, which by the end of the trip was fully fledged.

It was a tough but rewarding ascent, mostly forested (though the whirring of chainsaws suggested efforts in the opposite direction), with banks of raspberries that restored our somewhat-curtailed foraging efforts after Ella, having recently discovered green-apple-tasting

wood sorrel, erroneously ate a mouthful of clover. The last section to the summit was beautiful and scrubby, with a slightly dizzying series of tightly coiled switchbacks. We made it to the top just in time to enjoy our lunch in the rain, and as the clouds drew in darker and thunder began rumbling we thought it wise to get down the mountain relatively promptly. It soon transpired that with a steep, slippery gravelly path and several dodgy knees between us, there would be nothing quick about this descent. It was atmospheric though, with eerie lighting and thunder echoing through the valley. We eventually reached the bottom, and we rejoined the trail where the others had passed several hours ago. Now mid-afternoon, we shouldered the prospect of another 15km, and carried on. Along the trail on this side, which cut along the flank of a steep-sided ridge, there was clear damage to the trail as a result of the recent storms and flooding experienced by Slovenia. At points the trail had been practically washed away, and at others the buildup of debris made going equally difficult. The kilometres were slowly ticked off and we reached the campsite in darkness, to the relief of the others who had been waiting hungrily for us to arrive with half the food - which they then declined to use. While we set up camp, they 'cooked', with selective ingredients (ie nothing even remotely tasty) and we ended up with a near tear-inducing mass of stodge (that may have once been pasta?). This was by far the worst meal of the trip.



17/8/23

DAY 5: Camp Sorli to Camp Labrca, Tolmin, 24.6km, 1131m elev

'The rain damage to this book is today's doing.' - Ella's journal, 2023

The day started rather uneventfully, a climb up and away from the river afforded more breathtaking views, followed by a baking section of road into Podmelec. Here we met a local who implored us to visit Slap Sopota, a waterfall outside her village that 'everyone in Slovenia needed to visit'. Whilst some in the group had previously been unsure if the extra climb was worth it on tired legs - it had been sealed - we dropped our bags at the bottom of the path and went up to the spectacular 62m high waterfall, where we had our first swim of the day and a lengthy game of fetch with an enthusiastic pup. We carried on for a steep road section through Ljubinj and up the hill, where we enjoyed a lunch stop with our new trail friends overlooking the

electric blue of the lake below. We then descended to Most na Soči, practically running lakewards to escape the heat. Given what followed, the irony of this was not lost on us. As we swam, clouds gathered and we were peppered with rain – we departed, up and traversing the next hill. A steady drizzle followed us and we could hear the distant sound of a Reggae festival that was taking place in the valley. And then the heavens opened; water pressure higher than a shower, and suddenly we were on top of the festival and feeling its bass thumping through the mountain. Soaked through, in a daze of surrealism, we navigated the obstructions of fallen trees blocking the path, and huddled inside the first shelter we came to – it was only when we saw lightning flash a short distance away that we had the realisation that it was in fact built of corrugated iron – needless to say, we were back out in the rain pretty rapidly. Beginning to get cold, with water streaming down every surface of our bodies, we hurried towards the campsite a couple of km away, which we got to to find it practically underwater. Huddling in the café, a few hours were spent trying frantically to find somewhere dry to stay, without success. Close to midnight, the ground had drained just enough to pitch a tent, and we passed a damp night.

18/8/23

DAY 6: Rest day (just couple km into Tolmin)

We awarded ourselves a much-needed rest, spending the morning with the contents of all our bags splayed across the campsite, taking advantage of the sun to dry everything we owned. Sophia and Ella were very proud of their success in rustling up a meal from the free food left in the campsite kitchen, and enjoyed a sloppy lentil/couscous soup(?), while the others looked on with some dismay. We then headed into town to resupply and run a few errands before passing much of the day in the pub. A rare hostel night was cherished and we enjoyed the luxury of a real kitchen for a full-on feast.



19/08/23

DAY 7: Tolmin to Kobarid 16.2km, 162m elev

The day began with scrambled eggs and slightly stale bread rolls that were forced down with plenty of water to counteract the 20:80 egg to bread ratio. We took a bus back into Tolmin where we rejoined the trail, marking the start of the next few days up the Soca valley. We began parallel to the river, but a few kilometres in we realised it would soon veer away, so naturally had

to have a morning swim while we could. We found an alarmingly red and alarmingly large slug in the water - a rescue which definitely awarded the team some good karma points.

After this the majority of the day consisted of long stretches of road walking - which meant very little shade and too much direct sunlight, and made the going quite miserable, saved only by frequent breaks in the shade and passing through some pretty villages. At least it was flat - though muscles were still sore and this day also marked the beginning of a collective tiger balm dependence.

We arrived at the campsite in Kobarid, greeted by a view of the river crowned by a beautiful high bridge. We quickly set up camp and went for the second shop of the day after realising that this would likely be the last opportunity to restock for a couple of days. We also saw the familiar face of German Tim, who had pitched at a nearby plot. The evening consisted of a much needed swim where our climbing withdrawals finally got the best of us, resulting in a somewhat sketchy climb to an otherwise inaccessible ledge over the water, and subsequent jumping.



20/08/23

DAY 8: Kobarid to Bovec 20.3km, 490m elev

We set off around 6am to avoid the worst of the heat for as long as we could, and straight away we were treated to the view of the river snaking along shrouded in early-morning mist. The trail loosely followed the river, and we had some pretty technical (scrambly, over boulders, tree roots and loose rock) but thoroughly enjoyable walking - a far cry from the tarmac horror of the previous day. Alisha began to find it difficult though, exacerbated by some recurring health issues she'd been struggling with for the past few days. The others helped alleviate some of her pack weight by redistributing gear, and we were able to continue. We came across a concerning series of signs saying that the path ahead was closed, but with the only alternative being a significant detour on road and uphill, we carried on, and thankfully were soon reassured by walkers and mountain bikers coming the other way.

The last stretch of around 6km was along a road which we split by taking a lunch break by the river and having a swim - and a water-snake sighting, excitingly. The last few km of the day was challenging - we were hot, sore, exhausted and frankly fed up with all the tarmac. Nonetheless we made it to the campsite in Bovec and treated ourselves to some pizza at a restaurant next door. During the evening, though, Alisha began contemplating if she should continue the hike. A

combination of factors and a steep decline in overall energy and mental state meant that we all began to wonder if continuing would be detrimental. The rest of the group were very attentive in reassuring her and provided her with much needed comfort, and the decision was made that she'd see how things felt in the morning. The stars were particularly pretty this evening.

21/08/23

DAY 9: Bovec to Lago del Predil 17.8km, 938m elev

Another early start! Hana was experiencing some pretty bad foot pain, so our morning began with a quest to find a pharmacy for some athletic tape that took us on a tour of Bovec, a tourist hotspot of the Soca valley. Soon after leaving the town, Alisha recognised that continuing was not the right thing for her - a really difficult decision and one that the whole group was saddened by, while also acknowledging that it was probably the right one. We are all immensely proud of Alisha both for making it through what she did, despite her struggles, and also recognising when she was reaching her limit. After some sad goodbyes and redistribution of kit, she returned to Bovec before making her way home over the next couple of days.

The rest of us set off again, heading up towards the pass and over into Italy. It was an interesting walk that took us through war tunnels and back towards the high mountains, before beginning the long, steep, beautiful climb up and over the ridge to the border, gaining close to 1000m while climbing over fallen trees, navigating rocky gullies and waterfalls, and trying to remember how to breathe. We explored an old war lookout/battery before descending towards Lago del Predil to find somewhere to camp. Now over the border in Italy, and outside Triglav National Park, this was our first opportunity to wild camp, and we found a loosely flat spot overlooking the lake, and passed the evening stargazing.



22/08/23

DAY 10: Lago del Predil to Laghi di Fusine 14km, 345m elev

The executive decision was made to take the bus into Tarvisio to avoid 10km on a busy road, and we passed the morning meandering from coffee and croissants to pizza and gelato, trying

to fit a comprehensive Italian culinary experience into a couple of hours. (That assessment may be generous - I think our transition to hiker trash was finally complete at this point and all our senses just became honed on food). While Ella was tending to her blisters on the side of the street, a lovely shop owner, himself a Camino-walker, came out to impart some blister-draining wisdom upon our medic. We did our last food shop before our next few days cutting off the Juliana Trail and into the mountains, and set off for a relatively short afternoon of walking. Short, but painful. A few km of tarmac cycle path was borne before heading through the forest, where we were inundated by mosquitoes. This swiftly sent Sophia into sensory overload and she did not recover until we reached the lake and she dove into the water in desperation. Mosquitoes can't swim. She can. When she braved the land again every inch of skin was covered, from gloves to balaklava. Other than the tiny whining biting monsters, the Laghi di Fusine were serene and immensely beautiful, set against a sheer mountain backdrop. We excitedly welcomed Lu, who had made her way from Milan to join us for a few days, and found a wild camp spot on the saddle between the two lakes.



23/08/23

DAY 11: Laghi di Fusine to Erjavčeva koča mountain hut (Elen, Hana, Lu) 14.6km, 1100m /Dom Tamar Mountain hut (Sophia, Ella) 9.7km, 950m elev

After having briefly saluted the two masochist forwards of the group on the event of their 4am alarm (Sophia and Ella, off to the ambitious feat of basically opening a new free solo route up the Ponza di Mezzo peak), the remaining casual hikers snatched a couple more hours of sleep. Well rested Elen, Hana and Lu then ventured across the Italian-Slovenian border after some croissants masterfully defrosted by the local cafe owner and a quick ride on the bus from Fusine

to (almost) Rateče. From here a leisurely walk led us through the Olympic ski jumping slopes of Kranjska Gora (fascinating! And certainly we are not the only ones to think that given the astonishing amount of German-plated campers parked right at their feet). In correspondence of the Olympic park the path turned sharply right and started going up the valley between the Ponza peaks (the ones which our brave companions were trying to pass via ascent + descent, rather than circumnavigation) and the Mojstrovka (the massif separating us from our destination). We continued our walk along the Tamar valley at a sustained pace, allowed by the tolerable steepness. After passing the Dom Tamar hut (the point at which the routes of the two groups converged) we started the ascent of Mala Mojstrovka. This began with some (very) steep climb of wet and slippery rocks and continued on less technical but still quite steep terrain. The views were absolutely amazing along the whole ascent (had we had some sort of spyglass we may even have been able to see Ella and Sophia rolling down Ponza di Mezzo on the other side of the valley!). Lu decided to quit smoking after feeling her heart almost self-combust on the way up.

We had a quick meal at the top of the pass and started our descent towards Erjavčeva koča mountain hut. There we discovered that Ella and Sophia were stuck at Dom Tamar as the descent had taken them longer than expected and a storm had curtailed their efforts to reach us that night. Some beer with ginger, very yummy, and some sort of cabbage stew, not so yummy, were savoured.



Sophia and Ella had a more eventful day. We had climbed halfway up, to Rifugio Luigi Zacchi, by an acceptable breakfast hour. Here we discovered that the path we had intended to take was unpassable, and were shown an alternative route that passed further down the ridge, over Ponza Piccola and, despite being well-signposted and the way of a major long-distance trail, was not marked on either of our maps. This led us to mistakenly keep following the signs that said Ponza Piccola (ie up to the peak), instead of bypassing it via the pass. We made it to the summit (1902m) following a very technical ascent up a scree gully, to realise our error and that there was no path down the other side. We were forced back down the way we came - toeing the line between hiking and climbing, something very uncomfortable to do with no protection and 15kg on our backs. Finally over the pass on the other side, safe but slightly shaken, we began our descent towards the Dom Tamar hut. This was endless scree slope traversing, to the

utter despair of our knees, and it took us 3 hours to make it the 3km down. By the time we had descended into the valley, the others were far ahead and an approaching storm was threatening to unleash. We decided we'd made enough risky decisions for one day and resigned to stay at this hut, with a mountain separating us from the others (and most of our food). Plain rice (miserable) and an apple strudel (delightful) later, we retired to bed exhausted.

24/08/23

DAY 12: Erjavčeva koča/Dom Tamar mountain hut to Aljazev Dom (hitched round via Mojstrana)



Lu saw some dotted lines on the map (in Outdooractive language they mean sure death), chickened out and decided to take a three day detour to avoid them (and to see the 7 lakes valley which had been greatly recommended by some Belgian passer by. Spoiler: he was right. Stunning.)

Lu was also right. The map markings were decidedly ambiguous, and lacked a key, so Elen and Hana continued in the hope that it was passable without gear, as Ella and Sophia had the two VF kits, several km behind. After a long climb, they ended up at the base of a sheer 400m wall. Phone calls were exchanged between the two groups, and Elen and Hana descended to meet Ella and Sophia at the road, as we decided that the only way to make it to the hut we'd booked for that night would be to get a lift round to the next valley. This was slightly disappointing, and the tribulations of these two days definitely highlighted the importance of everyone double and triple checking route details, and cross-checking maps, especially when off the main trail. However, we made it successfully to the Aljazev Dom hut.

25/08/23

DAY 13: Rest Day at Aljazev Dom

This was a much-needed rest(/errand-running) day before undertaking the epic that was Triglav. We made preparations, stocking up with snacks, renting an extra two via ferrata kits and helmets, doing some washing, sorting packs, and eating a lot of burek.



26/08/23

DAY 14: Triglav Ascent 13.4km, 2074m elev

Triglav is Slovenia's highest mountain at 2864m, but it feels much higher and more isolated. Much of our trip had been building towards our ascent, which is an exposed and technical hike with several sections of via ferrata. We were moving by 5am, beginning in complete darkness. It got very steep very quickly, but as the valley became infused with light the view compensated for our burning calves. Before long we reached some aided via ferrata sections - very exposed and exhilarating. This hike/climb/scramble combination was sustained until we reached Triglavski Dom mountain hut, thankful for our helmets after we saw a group of ibex scampering across a sheer cliff, dislodging rocks which showered onto the heads of unsuspecting hikers below. After something to eat we continued across the lunar landscape, past the sad remnants of the Triglav glacier, and up

towards the summit, which stood tantalisingly close. It was a good two hours though before we reached it - the exposed via ferrata along the ridge and queues of people (reminiscent of those photos you see of Everest) made going extremely slow, but eventually we stumbled onto the summit - just as crowded - where we bore witness to the strange tradition of screaming into the bizarre rocket-like structure at the top. Despite the elevation not being huge (still sub 3000m), Triglav felt impressively high. Rocky peaks and scree slopes extended to every horizon below the glacially-scoured lunar highlands of the Triglav plateau, and far far below we could pick out the hut we had started at hours before.



The descent was even longer and more arduous than the ascent. The route down was precipitous - at one point we were downclimbing a 10m rock face, and the scree placed all eight of our knees firmly in the geriatric category. The hours on the mountain began to take their toll, and emotions ran high. Eventually though we made it back to the mountain hut we started at, just as darkness was falling - a 15-hour walking day. Shattered, we still had the challenge of getting to the campsite in Mojstrana, having missed the last bus. Splitting up, we worked our charms asking for a lift. Ella and Sophia, clearly the less charming/more feral duo, spent half an hour touring the car park before having any success, while Elen and Hana sped off. Elen was clearly so thrilled by this success that she 'decided' to gift her hiking boots to the kind Germans who gave them a ride.

At the campsite, Lu was awaiting the climberesses with food which she merrily prepared (having retained the ability to move her limbs after a day of hiking that didn't even remotely resemble that of the Triglav dominatrixes). After a much needed shower, we threw ourselves into the tents for some well deserved rest. Apparently Lu tried to hold Sophia's hand with her toes in her sleep, but this is to be blamed on the fact that the sleeping arrangement wasn't ideal, as it involved squeezing three people and their 60L bags in a two-man tent.



27/08/23

DAY 15: Mojstrana to Lipce 14km, 5m elev

While Elen was busy completing the get-your-boots-back side-quest, which saw her going back to the Olympic ski jumping spot (the guys were German, so it was to be expected that they would go there, given our observations from a couple days prior), we held council and decided to keep the day chiller and walk to Jesenice along the river. This would cut some distance and most importantly basically zero the elevation gain for the day. Unfortunately the walk wasn't as pretty as we would've expected from the first 200m on the trail. We soon had to abandon the riverside in favour of a highway-side (where there was a very mysterious queue in the direction of Kranjska Gora and the Italian border). Fortunately we quickly made it to Jesenice, which we had to fully cross to reach our campsite in Lipce. What an eerie experience. The town was surprisingly quiet and with quite an unsettling mood. This was probably enhanced by the disappointment of seeing the river (in which we were greatly hoping to be able to dive at the campsite) turn increasingly green (but not the good shade of green) due to the high number of unconventional tributaries: some chemical plants which were probably responsible for the entire GDP of the region given their size and number. Finally we made it to the campsite whose riversideness only meant we were going to have to deal with swarms of aggressive mosquitoes (Sophia wasn't pleased).

28/08/23

DAY 16: Lipce to Camp Sobec 22km, 529m elev

We parted ways with Lu, who had to head back to work, and we all felt the heaviness of the last couple of days of the trip - it was now not far at all back to Bled. It was a rainy day too, a pathetic fallacy reflecting our mood. It was not the most interesting walking, passing through a few villages with only one last section of proper trail; also our last real hill. As we neared our destination, the rain reached a crescendo, as did the urban-ness, and we trudged the last few kilometres on grey pavement, being pelted by rain, in a way that was strangely reminiscent of London. How ironic.

We pitched our tents (in the rain) and took shelter in the bar (out of the rain, just). It was incessant. We went (ran) to bed, eventually, in the early hours, in the rain.



29/08/23

DAY 17: Camp Sobec to Bled (Finish!!) 4.2km, 91m elev

It was still raining when we woke up. In fact, Sophia and Ella realised that the bottom end of their tent was actually floating - the fact that they were still dry is a huge testament to the tent. It was a good couple of hours before we braved the outside. We packed up, still in the rain, and trekked the last couple of kilometres into Bled, in the rain. We arrived - in the rain! - somewhat anticlimactically. We had completed the Juliana Trail (more or less), and they didn't even have any t-shirts in stock. A celebratory dinner (more pizza) was had, and preparations were made for our various onward journeys.

30/08/23

DAY 18: Parted ways...

A final celebration; a breakfast of 'eggy Bled' followed by a portion of the infamous Bled cake was had, before we parted ways. :(



2.3 Budget

Expenditure

Category	Cost
Accommodation	£1571
Groceries	£396
Transport	£1500 (approx)
Insurance	£416
Gear	£270
Other (mostly food/drink)	£342
TOTAL	£4495
AVERAGE PP(5)	£899

Left are the costs for our trip, grouped by category. This is quite crude as costs for transport etc varied quite a lot by person (eg Alisha getting home early, flights vs bus). We ended up spending approximately what we expected overall. The most significant expense, which could have been almost entirely negated had we chosen to hike a trail where you can wild camp, was accommodation.

Funding

We were lucky enough to receive generous financial support from multiple sources, summarised below. Though different members secured different amounts of funding, we pooled it together to ensure group expenses (groceries, accommodation, group gear etc) were covered for everyone before splitting the rest to cover personal expenses such as personal gear and transport.

Source	Amount	Quantity	Total
Exploration Board	400	4	1600
Old Centralians	400	4	1600
Lord Mayor's 800th Anniversary Trust	400	3	1200
RSMA	250	1	250
		TOTAL	£4650

The funding we received has more or less exactly covered our expedition expenses, and we are incredibly grateful for this - without it the trip would not have been possible.

3 Considerations

3.1 Environment

Something significant to consider for all of us is environmental impact. As always seems to be the case, there is a trade-off to be made between ease and cost, and sustainability. Therefore, with respect to transport, those of us with the time to travel overland in order to minimise flights and thus carbon emissions. We will still offset the carbon emissions of our travel through Forest Carbon. (<https://www.forestcarbon.co.uk>), a British Carbon Offsetting organisation that offsets carbon by developing native woodland and restoring peatlands in the UK and internationally. We chose this organisation as it has no negative impact on the local community and it enhances biodiversity.

While on the expedition we minimised our impact by following the seven 'leave no trace' principles;

1. plan ahead and prepare,
2. leave what you find,
3. travel and camp on durable surfaces,
4. minimise campfire impacts,
5. dispose of waste properly
6. respect wildlife,
7. be considerate of other visitors.

In more detail:

- Waste Management

We adopted a strict "carry-in, carry-out" policy, ensuring that all waste generated during the expedition, including food wrappers, packaging and personal items, was carried with us and properly disposed of at designated waste collection points or back in urban areas.

Where possible we separated recyclable materials from general waste and disposed of them in appropriate recycling facilities (Slovenia was excellent for this).

- Trail Conservation

We stayed on designated trails and avoided creating new paths, preventing soil erosion and damage to fragile vegetation.

- Wildlife and Habitat Protection

We respected and observed wildlife from a safe distance, ensuring we didn't disturb their natural habitats. We refrained from feeding or approaching animals and adhered to any guidelines provided by local conservation authorities.

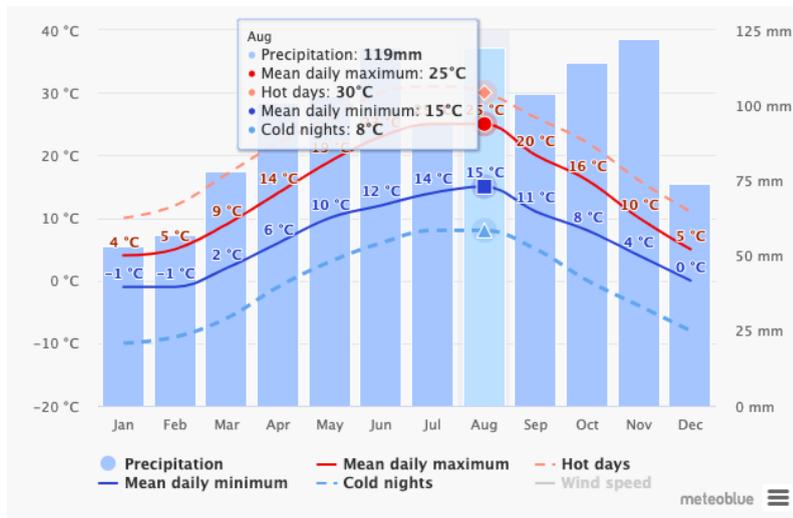
- Cultural Sensitivity and Preservation

When we encountered local communities during our expedition, we respected their customs, traditions, and private property. We made efforts to learn about the local culture, supported local businesses and engaged in responsible tourism practices that benefit the local population.

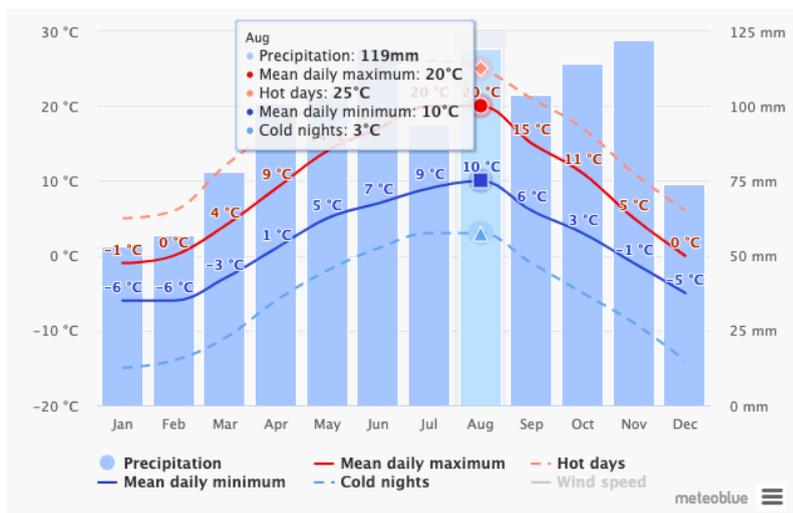
3.2 Weather

Although Slovenia is a small country, due to its geographical location and varied terrain, the climate is also quite varied. The Juliana Trail is situated in the north-west of Slovenia, which has an alpine climate. Average weather conditions seemed relatively consistent along the route, other than changes due to elevation. Generally we were able to expect temperatures of 20-25°C

in August, which proved to be broadly right - though several days definitely exceeded 30. This



was very warm to hike in, and so it was imperative to have adequate sun protection and keep hydrated. Much of the trail was forested and kept us out of direct sun, thankfully. Particularly in the mountains, changeable weather should also be expected, and summer thunderstorms are definitely something that we encountered. In these conditions we had to exercise caution and at times make the decision not to hike .



These meteoblue climate diagrams are based on 30 years of hourly weather model simulations and give good indications of typical climate patterns and expected conditions (temperature, precipitation, sunshine and wind). Above are a couple of relevant figures of temperature and precipitation for Bled, our start/end point (top), and Javornik, which is around the point of highest elevation on the trail (1300m)(bottom).

3.3 Finances, Entry requirements

Finance

- The official currency of Slovenia is the Euro (EUR), which is accepted throughout the country.
- Current exchange rate: 1 GBP = 1.12 EUR
- Credit and debit cards are widely used, but we will also carried some cash for smaller establishments and in more remote regions where card acceptance was limited. ATMs are readily available in urban areas.

Entry Requirements

- Passport Validity: Travellers entering Slovenia must have a valid passport that remains valid for at least three months beyond their intended departure date.
- Can spend up to 90 days within a 180-day period without a visa.
- No need to show proof of vaccination or negative covid test.

- Triglav National Park: There are no specific entry requirements or permits needed to visit the park itself. It is open to public access and welcomes visitors throughout the year.



3.4 Terrain, Wildlife, Hazards

Terrain

The terrain along the Juliana Trail varies, encompassing diverse landscapes, including alpine meadows, rugged mountain passes, dense forests, glacial valleys, and picturesque lakes. Probably largely the result of damage to the trail in recent storms, we found the trail to be more technical than we anticipated, which made for some challenging (but very enjoyable/stimulating) hiking. We were very grateful to have trekking poles for the ascents and descents. The amount of road walking on the Juliana trail was also not insignificant - and this should not be underestimated. The hard tarmac is a killer for aching feet and mentally these stretches are also a challenge.

Wildlife

Bears

Slovenia is home to a population of brown bears, although encounters are relatively rare. We had no bear encounters, but took sensible precautions and were all aware of the following recommended course of action in case of one:

Before departure:

- Look up sightings and 'hotspots' for bear activity in regions of travel.
- Purchase bear-proof food containers, bear bells and bear spray.

While travelling:

- Be vigilant and alert
- Keep bear spray accessible
- Check for signs of activity (scat, tracks, carcasses)
- Attach bear bells to belts/ backpacks.

In camp:

- Cook at least 100 metres downwind from campsite (area where tents are pitched)
- Store all food in bear proof containers and ideally suspended above the ground, away from tents.
- Ensure food isn't left out and avoid 'smelly' foods.

In case of encounter:

- Identify yourself: Speak loudly and raise arms so the bear knows you are human and not a prey animal. Bear may come closer or stand on its hind legs to get a closer look- it is important to remember that a standing bear is more likely to be curious as opposed to threatening.
- Stay calm: Bear attacks are very unlikely. It is possible that the bear will display signs of aggression as a defence mechanism such as woofing, yawning, growling and laying their ears back. If this occurs, continue talking to the bear in low tones. Do not run!
- If the bear is stationary, move away slowly sideways (if possible) to keep an eye on the bear, motion of moving sideways is also less threatening to bears.

In case of aggressive encounter:

The region is home to brown bears, as such, the following is advice specific to this fact.

- If attacked by a brown bear, leave your backpack and play dead. Lay flat on your stomach with hands clasped behind your neck. Spread legs to make it harder for the bear to turn you over. Remain still until the bear leaves the area.
 - Fighting back often provokes the attack further. However, if attack persists, fight back vigorously using whatever you have at hand, targeting blows to the bear's head.
- If an attack takes place whilst in a tent, or an attack follows stalking, do NOT play dead. In this context, you should fight back. This is a rarer scenario but unprovoked attacks of this nature are often more serious as it likely means the bear is acting out of hunger as opposed to fear.
- Bear pepper spray can also be used. Its main component is a lachrymatory agent, shown to be very efficient.

Ticks

- Ticks can be found in various regions of Slovenia, including areas along the Juliana Trail. Ticks are small arachnids that attach themselves to the skin of animals or humans to feed on blood. While most tick bites do not cause significant harm, they can transmit diseases such as Lyme disease or tick-borne encephalitis (TBE) in certain regions.
- Again, we were all aware of the following risks posed by ticks (Sophia shared her personal Lyme disease horror story) and precautions to take. Luckily though we found few if any ticks while hiking.
 - Risk: Ticks in Slovenia can carry Lyme disease, which is the most common tick-borne illness. TBE is also a concern in some parts of Slovenia, particularly in forested areas. The risk of contracting these diseases is relatively low but exists, especially in areas with high tick populations.

- Vaccinations: In England, you can get vaccinated against TBE. We will consult a healthcare professional or travel clinic for up-to-date information on available vaccines and their suitability for our specific circumstances.
- Tick Prevention Measures:
 - Wear appropriate clothing: Cover your body as much as possible by wearing long-sleeved shirts, long pants tucked into socks, and closed-toe shoes. Light-coloured clothing can help spot ticks more easily.
 - Use tick repellents: Apply an insect repellent containing DEET (N,N-diethyl-meta-toluamide) or picaridin to exposed skin. Permethrin-based repellents can be used on clothing, tents, and gear. Follow the instructions on the product label.
 - Perform regular tick checks: After spending time outdoors, thoroughly check your body for ticks. Pay close attention to areas such as the scalp, behind the ears, armpits, groin, and the back of the knees. Promptly remove any ticks you find.
 - Tick removal: If you find a tick attached to your skin, use fine-tipped tweezers to grasp the tick as close to the skin's surface as possible. Pull upward with steady, even pressure to remove the tick. Clean the area with soap and water or disinfectant.
- Awareness of Symptoms: If you develop symptoms after a tick bite, such as a rash, fever, fatigue, muscle aches, or neurological symptoms, seek medical attention and inform the healthcare professional about the tick bite.

Hazards and natural disasters

Slovenia can be susceptible to landslides after heavy rainfall due to the terrain, soil, land cover and geology. Before our departure there had been several periods of heavy rainfall and extreme storms, resulting in the worst flooding in the country's history. We kept a close eye on the advice with respect to the condition of trails and slope stability, and were very conscious of potential dangers posed.

With climate change altering slope and bedrock stability through changes in precipitation and/or temperature, as we saw, landslide prediction becomes more difficult and so it's important to retain awareness. In the rare case of an extreme landslide: move as far as possible out of the path of the oncoming slide as possible; if this is not possible crouch down and cover heads for protection.

On the other hand rock slides are often inadvertently started by humans, but made more likely by terrain. Therefore, we were vigilant both to not cause a rockslide and to not obtain injury. We adhered to the following precautions; never walking in another hiker's "fall line", walking crossways instead of straight up or down slopes filled with loose rocks and taking our time to find our footing.

Finally we kept an eye on any media reports during our expedition to monitor if any earthquake, wildfire or landslide event, and in particular flooding, were occurring that might impact our expedition or travel indirectly. We followed the advice of local authorities and the Triglav National Park with respect to the flooding and damage.

3.5 Navigation, Communications, Logistics

Navigation

- We had several methods of navigation, to ensure we had options if any one of them failed. We all practised and ensured we were competent and confident making our way using any of the methods.
- There are GPS tracks of the official route as well as those uploaded by people hiking it - we adapted these to our route and uploaded them to a GPS device to follow.
- We also got a subscription to the navigation service/app Outdooractive. This is what we used to plan our route and found it to be, on the whole, very successful and comprehensive, with the exception of a couple of paths in the mountains. We all had the app on our phone with the routes and maps downloaded with the ability to access them offline in case anyone got separated from the group for any reason. We made sure not to rely on this as our only source of navigation (as it is dependent on having charged devices), but in the end this is what we ended up using as our primary route-finding method, for its convenience.
- We also carried a physical map of the route: the Slovenian Alpine Association (Planinska zveza Slovenije) has a series of detailed and comprehensive 1:50,000 and 1:25,000 paper maps of the Julian Alps/Triglav National Park. We carried a 1:50,000 map that covered the whole area of the trail, so that we didn't need multiples, though in retrospect this didn't have enough detail to be of much real use.

Communications

- We each carried a phone and small portable charger, and we had a larger solar-powered power bank for the group which was definitely worth having given that we were camping and worked well so that we didn't have to rely on finding places/time to stop and charge devices. We found that we didn't need prepaid SIM cards for local networks and most of us were covered with our existing contracts.
- Due to the relative accessibility of the trail we decided not to carry a satellite phone. We did largely have mobile network coverage but it could have been an option for use in emergencies if we didn't have service while in the mountains.

Logistics, getting equipment

- In terms of getting equipment and supplies, we carried the majority of our gear as part of our bus/plane luggage allowance.
- Consumables such as fuel and food we then purchased there. We had no issue with finding things we needed out there - we passed shops relatively frequently (at least every couple of days) and they tended to stock anything we needed.

3.6 Food, Water, Fuel, Wild camping

Due to the long sustained hiking, likely in hot sun, maintaining calorie intake, nutrition and hydration were essential for successful and healthy completion of the expedition.

Food

In terms of resupplying food, we passed through a town at least every day or two along our route to buy food and any other necessities. This worked well on this very accessible route, and

resupply boxes/dehydrated meals; options that we considered pre-departure, would have been unnecessary extra effort.

We aimed to consume around 3000 calories per day. The first few days, where we were carrying 5 days worth of food, we had slightly sub-optimal calorific intake, but after that we ensured we had more than enough. We prioritised food that is calorific, space and weight-efficient, of decent nutritional value, easy to prepare and at least somewhat palatable. All vegetarian, we were conscious to ensure we got sufficient protein and vitamin b12 - lots of nuts and pulses.

Our general meals were as follows:

Breakfast: Porridge (we found overnight oats to be much easier to get down)

Lunch: Wraps, cheese, tomato paste, mayo, veggie sausage

Dinner: generally alternated between lentils and couscous, and pasta with soya mince.

Snacks: Nuts, dried fruit, cereal bars, chocolate, biscuits



Water

Particularly considering the heat and exertion, keeping well-hydrated was of the utmost importance. On the Juliana trail we had no issues finding water - in addition to the plentiful natural sources (rivers, lakes), we frequently passed public taps. When we collected water from rivers/lakes we filtered it using a Sawyer filter, but generally this wasn't necessary. We each had the capacity to carry 4-5l of water (some days 5l was easily consumed), and generally carried 2-3 litres, and always tried to keep 1l minimum.

We also each had 2-3 (or more...) electrolyte tablets per day. We were sweating a lot, and so had a lot of salts that needed replenishing, and we quickly found electrolytes to make a huge difference, reducing muscle cramping and any mild dehydration.

Fuel, gas

We were able to find standard screw-top gas canisters easily in Slovenia. We stocked up with two canisters when we arrived, and remarkably still had the best part of a canister left at the end. It was still worth carrying two though as it allowed us to have two stoves going at a time and made cooking far more efficient.

Wild camping

Wild camping is not allowed in Slovenia so we avoided it other than when we were across the border in Italy (2 nights), out of respect for their rules and also of the Triglav National Park. As always when wild camping, it is important to respect our surroundings, in accordance with the 'leave no trace' principles outlined earlier.

There are therefore a few things to consider when choosing a camp spot:

- Out of sight of any houses, or with permission
- Not in livestock fields
- Off the trail
- Near water source
- Dry pitch on relatively flat ground

As a group, we were cautious not to make too much noise or disturb people/animals.

We also ensured we left nothing behind and carried all our rubbish with us.

3.7 Equipment

Ensuring we had appropriate, good-quality, and lightweight equipment was a vital consideration to be made. We all knew from experience the significance of the weight of a pack and thus made an effort to share out the weight of the group kit and pare down our equipment to the necessities - while ensuring we have enough to be safe and retain some level of comfort. We each aimed for a base pack weight of under 10kg, excluding consumables (water, food, fuel), which could be up to an additional ~7kg, depending on how recently we had resupplied. In reality some of us were probably slightly over this goal.

Our numbers fluctuated between 4 and 5, and we correspondingly fluctuated between 2 and 3 2-man tents - Alisha took one with her when she left, and when Lu joined we squeezed 3 men in a 2-man. We also carried two stoves and two water filters: they are relatively light pieces of kit which having multiples of will save significant amounts of time. We also carried a group first aid kit, solar charger, maps and GPS device.

Much of this group kit (1 tent, 1 stove and pans, solar charger, GPS device) was kindly lent by the Exploration board, which was really helpful in allowing us to minimise expenses with respect to gear.

In terms of clothing, light layers were ideal for the warm climate, to be cool and breathable but ideally also provide sun protection. Hats and sunglasses were similarly necessary and warmer layers such as fleeces/down jackets were invaluable for cooler conditions at altitude/at night, as well as waterproofs, which got well-used.

Group	Personal
2-man tents x2-3 Cooking equipment x2 (stove, pots/pans) Water filter x2 Solar power bank First aid kit GPS device, map, compass Trowel Shared toiletries (soap and shampoo bars, toothpaste, suncream)	Backpack (40-60l) Hiking boots/shoes Sleeping bag Sleeping mat Trekking poles Water bladders/bottles (4-5l capacity) Personal first aid (inc plasters, blister plasters, painkillers etc) Personal toiletries (toothbrush at least!) Clothing (shorts, trousers, light shirts, underwear, warmer layers) Waterproofs Sunhat (ideally wide-brimmed), sunglasses Head torch, dry bags, lightweight travel towel, gloves, camp shoes (flipflops/sandals) Phone, personal power bank/charger Bowl, spork

3.8 Training

With regards to training, we all made an effort to develop and maintain our fitness for the expedition by exercising regularly, including climbing, running, swimming and cycling multiple times a week. Unfortunately we never found a time to do a training hike as a full group, but in preparation Alisha, Ella and Sophia did a 3-day hike on Dartmoor in June; Ella and Sophia fastpacked round the Isle of Wight (127km) in 72 hours, and Sophia completed the Welsh 3000s challenge in 48 hours. Elen and Hana managed to get out on regular day hikes.

We ensured every member of the team had a strong foundation in multi-day hiking/camping skills, including proficient navigation, familiarity with our equipment, using a GPS device and managing food and drink.

The significance of sufficient physical training became evident while in Slovenia when some members struggled slightly. This was perhaps something it would have been good to work on more as a team.



3.9 First aid, Emergency Action Plan

Most team members had first aid training by the time of the expedition. Luckily we never had to use any first aid beyond minor scrapes, but below is the emergency rescue plan we would have followed had we had to.

If we had had to leave the trail in a no-emergency situation (as Alisha did) this would have been straightforward as the route passes through towns/villages most days, and there is a good public transport network of buses across the national park and to return to Ljubljana.

Evacuation Plan for Injuries on the Juliana Trail, Slovenia:

Assess the Situation

- Remain calm and evaluate the severity of the injury.
- If immediate attention is required, activate the emergency plan.
- If the injury is minor and the person is stable, provide first aid and proceed with caution.

Seek Help:

- Dial the emergency number in Slovenia: **112** (both police and medical emergencies)
 - This number can be dialled free of charge from any mobile or landline phone and will connect you to the appropriate emergency services.
- Upon contact, provide accurate information regarding the location, nature of the injury and any other relevant details.
- Follow any provided instructions.

Safety Measures:

- Ensure the injured individual is in a safe and stable position, away from any additional hazards.
- Refer to risk assessment to see how to proceed in specific situations.
- Assign someone to stay with the injured person while others go to seek help.

Nearby Hospitals and Emergency Contacts:

- There are several hospitals and medical facilities located in the vicinity of the Juliana Trail, including:
 - University Medical Centre Ljubljana
 - Address: Zaloška cesta 7, 1000 Ljubljana
 - Contact: +386 1 522 50 00
 - General Hospital Jesenice
 - Address: Splošna bolnišnica Jesenice, Cesta maršala Tita 112, 4270 Jesenice
 - Contact: +386 4 586 40 00
 - General Hospital Radovljica
 - Address: Splošna bolnišnica Radovljica, Gorenjska cesta 23, 4240 Radovljica
 - Contact: +386 4 537 21 00
 - General Hospital Kranj
 - Address: Splošna bolnišnica Kranj, Gosposvetska cesta 7, 4000 Kranj
 - Contact: +386 4 20 60 100
- We will ensure to always have access to both a physical and digital map to help us identify the nearest medical facility in relation to our location on the trail.

Evacuation:

- If the situation is critical and immediate evacuation is necessary, follow the guidance of the emergency services, and/or contact the nearest hospital directly for advice on the best course of action.
- Contact the relevant insurance company for guidance and to ensure they are happy with the proceedings recommended by the hospital and/or emergency services, particularly if there are costs involved.

Follow-up and Documentation

- Keep a record of all the communication and actions taken during the emergency.

Helicopter Evacuation Plan

- Depending on the severity of the situation, emergency services may dispatch a helicopter for evacuation.
- If this happens, ensure the following:
 - The individual on the ground should determine the following to communicate to the pilot:
 - Location of landing zone
 - Wind aspect and speed
 - Hazards around the landing zone
 - The landing zone must be as such:
 - Flat area, less than 10-degree slope, approximately 25x25m square in daylight, 33x33m in the dark
 - Area free of obstructions
 - Firm ground
 - Clearly mark the landing area with objects that will not blow away
 - After landing:
 - Approach the helicopter in full view of the pilot, do not run
 - Assist the injured person as needed but avoid interfering with the helicopter's operation.
- It is important to remember that helicopter evacuations are coordinated and authorised by emergency services and depend on the severity of the injury and the availability of helicopter resources.



3.10 Risk Assessment

The following risk assessment takes into account the general risks associated with an expedition of this nature, as well as risks associated with the region.

Risks are prioritised in accordance to the perceived risk level. Likelihood and Severity are ranked on a scale of 1-3. Upon assigning a ranking to Likelihood and Severity of a hazard, the values are multiplied to produce a 'risk rating'.

This risk assessment is intended to be dynamic and will be amended as required.

		Likelihood			
		Very Likely	Possible	Unlikely	
		3	2	1	
Severity	Major	3	9	6	3
	Moderate	2	6	4	2
	Trivial	1	3	2	1

Risk Matrix Scoring

Hazard	Consequence	Prevention	Response	Likelihood	Severity	Risk Rating
Hiking						
Exhaustion/ fatigue	Chronic tiredness, dizziness and loss of focus resulting in increased risk of injury.	Plan regular breaks to accommodate all members. Regularly drink water and snack on foods that will maintain glycogen levels.	In cases of extreme fatigue, consider calling it a day and take appropriate rest days to recover.	3	2	6

Dehydration	Dizziness, seizures, shock, death.	Keep hydrated at all times- Hydrate before embarking on daily hike and drink small amounts frequently every 20 mins. Keep water accessible and replenish electrolytes regularly.	In not so severe cases, rehydrate the body. Consume something sweet to compensate for lost sugar, and something salty to replace lost salt. Seek medical help in severe cases and be prepared to administer CPR.	2	3	6
Hypothermia and exposure	Fatigue, confusion, shivering, slurred speech, neurological dysfunction, death.	Wear warm, multi-layered clothing when required and keep dry. Ensure tents/ shelter are adequately warm and protected from the elements.	Seek warm shelter, remove and wet clothing and gently provide external heat (e.g., warm beverages, warm, dry compresses etc) Seek medical help in severe cases and be prepared to administer CPR.	2	3	6
Trips and falls	Sprained, twisted, fractured or broken ankle or knee. Other injuries.	Ensure to always travel with at least one other person. Be observant and avoid hazardous routes. Ensure you have access to a first aid kit at all times.	Carry out necessary first aid in response to injury.	3	2	6
Bad weather	Difficult navigation, unsuitable and thus dangerous walking conditions, increased risk of other hazards.	Check weather regularly. Be prepared for different weather conditions and seek shelter/ set up camp earlier than anticipated if needed. Take rest days in particularly bad weather.	In the case of bad weather, ensure to refer to map and GPS more often.	3	2	6
Small accidents (e.g., cuts, sprains, etc)	Inability to use affected body part, infection if left untreated.	Be sensible and conscious of surroundings. Ensure you have access to a first aid kit at all times.	Carry out necessary first aid in response to injury.	2	2	4

Larger injuries (e.g., severe bleeding, fractures, etc)	Possibly serious and permanent injury. Increased risk of further complications associated with injury such as shock.	Ensure to carry out activities with other members where possible. Exercise caution at all times.	Carry out necessary first aid in response to injury. Seek medical help in severe cases.	2	3	6
Injury sustained due to heavy loads	Strain and or muscular damage resulting in impaired movement and ability to carry loads.	Distribute loads between the group based on abilities of each member. Ensure backpack provides sufficient support and try to minimise load where possible in planning for the trip. Stretch daily.	Be prepared to alter distribution of weight to accommodate injured member whilst they recover.	2	1	3
Blisters	Pain when walking. Blisters prone to infection.	Take blister plasters such as compeed and deal with blister immediately. Ensure appropriate, well-fitting footwear is worn with hiking socks to minimise friction.	Dress the blister using antibiotic ointment and gauze, or a plaster.	3	1	3
Heat exhaustion	Elevated body temperature, headache, dizziness and tiredness which may delay progress.	Ensure to keep hydrated and avoid hiking at maximum sunlight where possible (try to minimise direct exposure). Wear hats and take regular breaks to cool down.	Seek a cool place. Lie down and drink plenty of water and cool body down with water or by fanning down.	3	2	6
Camping						

Stove breakage	Inability to cook or boil unclean water	Take maintenance and repair kit, including spare parts. Take two stoves to ensure that there is a backup if the first were to fail. Ensure all equipment is checked prior to expedition to ensure everything is operational and in good working order.	Use backup kit if required. In the rare chance both stoves are lost, ensure issue is resolved before continuing journey.	1	2	2
Fuel loss/ leakage	Inability to cook or boil unclean water. Fire or explosion risk.	Frequently check stove and fuel bottles. Fill stove bottles with funnels. Ensure fuel bottles are correctly rated. Do not overtighten seals and wash off outside of bottles/ canisters.	Be prepared to deal with any fires that may occur. Seek help.	1	3	3
Tent fire	Loss of tent, possible burns.	Cook outside of tent and keep all naked flames away from where tent is pitched.	Be prepared to deal with any fires that may occur. Seek help.	1	3	3
Tent loss/ breakage	Loss of shelter and consequent exposure to elements.	Appropriate spares and repair kits will be carried. Tents will be checked prior to expedition to ensure they are fit for use as a shelter. Routinely check tents for any damage.	Patch up any minor damages that may be sustained to the tent. In the case of tent loss, seek shelter elsewhere.	1	2	2
Trips and slips in tents	Sprained, twisted, or damaged joints/bones.	Ensure campsite is clear of obstacles. Be organised and ensure to keep campsite decluttered. Walk around with a head lamp when dark.	If members see unnecessary clutter that may cause injury, clear it up. In the case of injury carry out appropriate first aid.	1	2	3
Dirty water	Transmission of disease such as cholera and diarrhoea.	Ensure that water sources are checked for obvious contaminants, always filter and sterilise water.	In the case of diarrhoea ensure to stay well hydrated. In the case of serious illness seek medical help.	1	2	3

Food poisoning	Diarrhoea, vomiting, dehydration	Ensure all food is fully cooked, sanitise hands and work surfaces thoroughly, do not forage for food.	Stay hydrated if afflicted with food poisoning.	1	2	3
Wildlife						
Bear camp attack	Destruction of equipment and food supplies.	Use dry food. Store food in bear proof containers away from base camp. Ensure campsite is clean and cook away from campsite/ tents. Keep rubbish away in sealed containers away from the camp. For more information refer to 'How to handle bears' section of this proposal.	Remain calm- if in tent stay quiet.	2	3	6
Bear Personal Encounter/ Attack	Shock, stolen food, broken equipment, injury or death.	Travel with bear spray on established trails. For more information refer to 'How to handle bears' section of this proposal.	If bear is stationary, move away slowly and sideways; allows you to keep an eye on bear and avoid tripping. If bear follows you, either retreat slowly or stop and hold your ground.	2	3	6
Snakes	Region has many venomous snakes like the nose-horned viper which when bitten results in severe pain, bleeding, kidney failure as well as other organ failures.	Wear clothing which covers vulnerable areas such as ankles. Avoid walking through foliage. Be observant and listen for characteristic sounds many of these snakes make.	Seek medical help. Early administration of suitable antivenom (or antivenin) is the mainstay of treatment	2	3	6
General insect bites	Discomfort, potential infection or allergic reaction.	Wear clothing which covers vulnerable areas. Insect repellent.	Can use ointments to relieve pain and itchiness. Take anti-histamines in the case of mild allergic reactions.	3	1	3

General Travel Risks						
Car crash	Minor/serious injury or death, loss/damage of equipment.	Remain alert when crossing roads, avoid long walks along roads where possible. Make yourself seen.	Seek medical help in the case of serious injury.	1	3	3
Theft/ mugging	Loss of property and potential personal injury.	Travel in towns according to FCO advice and use common sense. Remain in groups at all times.	If confronted with thief, avoid conflict. Try to replace lost equipment.	1	1	1

4 Conclusion

4.1 Expedition Summary

Our Juliana Trail expedition, while not without its hiccups, was overall a real success. We hiked close to 300km, averaging over 800m of elevation gain per day, and summited Triglav, Slovenia's highest mountain (2,864m). We learnt immense amounts: about each other, about the landscape, and about the nature of these endurance adventures. We laughed and we cried; experienced all the highs and lows of a long-distance hike, and watching everyone else go through this and fall in love with the whole process was for me, having experienced it before, one of the most rewarding things about this trip. We formed a tight team, and though we welcomed and lost members along the way, we retained the same closeness and morale throughout. We supported each other when we struggled and allowed each other to fully be ourselves. We fully embraced gremlin mode, went a bit delirious most days, developed electrolyte addictions, played endless games of Cabo, had too many chunky dunks to count, and lost the function of our knees.

Beyond the team, we were privileged to explore Slovenia and the wealth of natural beauty it has to offer. Going there in the quite immediate aftermath of the worst natural disaster in the country's history, although we were some way from the worst-hit areas, we really saw the sense of community too; people pulling together in hardship (which we too emulated - though our hardship was admittedly self-inflicted).

There is so much to be gained from doing things like this: the sense of appreciation of the natural world that you get isn't really comparable to anything else. Your days begin to mimic the rhythm of the sun and your feet create a rhythm with the earth. You come to know corners of people that don't show themselves in day-to-day life, and this usually includes very big corners of yourself. I think all of us would wholeheartedly recommend an expedition of this kind to anyone seriously considering it. Having said that, there are a few lessons we learnt that may be wise to bear in mind -

4.2 Advice for future expeditions

Despite having quite a broad range of experience in day and thru-hiking across all the team, adventuring into unknown territories, maybe at different latitudes than usual and on different terrains left us with a feeling of having learned several valuable lessons. An example of this is having learned at our expense about the importance for every member of the team to thoroughly check each day's route. This is fundamental in spotting potential difficulties on the route and gives the group the possibility to collectively assess feasibility and risk, rather than leaving it to one (forgetful) person and having everyone simply assume that the route has been checked and deemed viable.

On the other hand, there were several things we took account of while planning and preparing for the route that revealed themselves as fundamental. For example: taking electrolyte supplements (leccylytes <33) throughout the day was of great help in retaining strength, especially on very warm days, which for us was most of them. We sweated more than we thought possible, and so it follows that you need to compensate with more electrolytes than you think possible. This turns out to be quite a lot. Be wary: addiction may follow. Don't forget the water.

Another piece of gear whose importance very rapidly became blatant are hiking poles. We can't overstate the importance of carrying a pair with you if planning a long hike with even small

elevation gains/drops. Had we not had our poles we probably would be all looking into reconstructive knee surgery right now.

[a note from Alisha]

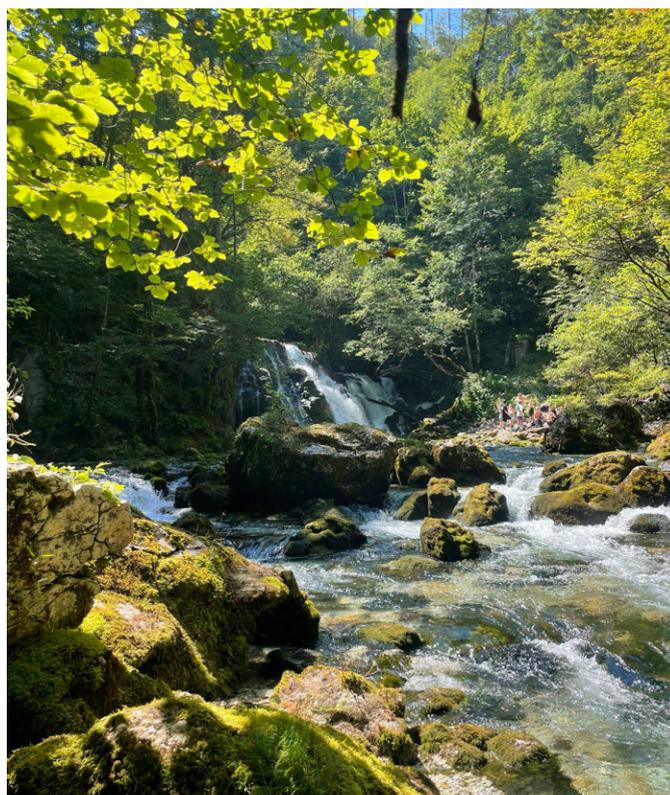
Recognize your own limits. We all like to think that we are invincible but ultimately our body and mind are only one Slovenian hike from raging war against us. Pushing yourself is great and shows commitment but don't do it at the expense of your well-being. Speaking from the perspective of a 'less experienced' member (- *cough* Alisha), it can be a real challenge to accept that you might not in fact be the human embodiment of physical fitness and mental fortitude that you thought yourself to be. The physical and mental demands of a nearly 300 km trek are not for everyone and that is perfectly fine!- there's no medal for self-inflicted suffering.

Unfortunately, such revelations tend to follow a rollercoaster of emotions and despite preaching the importance of recognising how you feel, it is also important to note that those same feelings can be rather deceiving. One moment you feel amazing and the next you're questioning all the life decisions that led you to the one resulting in you sleeping in a flooded tent in torrential rain. Just give yourself some time to rationalise your feelings- write them down or the scariest of all- talk about them to your team. Everyone has your best interests in mind. As it turns out, sharing your feelings, regardless of if they are positive or negative, can be strangely comforting (who would've thought!).

On another note, it's very easy for me to sit here and blame my unpredictable emotions on my eventual decision to tap out whilst neglecting the fact that I most definitely did not train enough. Unfortunately, relying on good 'day-to-day fitness' does not eliminate the need to properly prepare for such insane adventures- so train. Go on those weekend hikes and go to the gym!

4.3 Acknowledgements

We would like to express immense gratitude to the Imperial College Exploration Board, the Old Centralians Trust, the Royal School of Mines Association, and the Lord Mayor's 800th Anniversary Awards Trust for their extremely generous financial support, without which the expedition would not have been possible. Enormous thanks again to the Exploration Board for the loan of gear and advice with planning the trip.



Bonus pics!

