



HLADNIKIA PAŠT INACIFOLIA

The humble Hladnikia grows in rocky pastures and in crevasses; its favorite place to grow is the **Trnovo Forest**, whose Karst features provide the perfect habitat. This species represents Slovenia's sole **endemic genus**, which means that we should enjoy it when we see it, but we should never pick it and take it with us.

INFORMATION

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MALA GORA

1034m ASL

"A symbol of hard work and fond memories"

COORDINATES OF IMPORTANT SITES [WGS84]

- Trailhead in Kamnje [WGS84: 45.899467, 13.833109]
- Lodge on Mala Gora [WGS84: 45.925558, 13.844672]
- The Anton Bavčer Lodge [WGS84: 45.929153, 13.853128]
- Kucelj [WGS84: 45.928839, 13.824383]
- The Sv. Pavel Ridge [WGS84: 45.912481, 13.809551]

TRAILS

- Kamnje - Mala Gora (Črna Peč bivouac shelter) 2.5 hours
- Kamnje - Mala Gora (Trail of Mowers and Rakers) 2 hours
- Predmeja - Mala Gora (trail halfway up Mt. Čaven) 1.5 hours
- Mala Gora - Kucelj 1 hour
- Mala Gora - Anton Bavčer Lodge on Mt. Čaven 0.5 hour
- Mala Gora - Anton Bavčer Lodge on Mt. Čaven (along the ridge) 1 hour
- Mala Gora - Sv. Pavel Ridge 2 hours
- Sv. Pavel Ridge - Kamnje 0.5 hour



MALA GORA, a symbol of hard work and priceless memories

The Mala Gora plateau is hidden from the valley, nestled as it is at **around 1000 m above sea level in the embrace of Mt. Čaven**. Mostly grass and shrubs grow here, bordered by a rocky ridge to the south that gently sweeps down to the valley. It is wonderful to take a hike along this sunny ridge, bathed in the sun and overgrown with mountain grass, with tons of other interesting plants that are typical for the Mediterranean and the Alpine piedmont. The hills, which slope down to the vineyards and rise again sharply on the other side, have several basins or depressions where **lilies of the valley** and **daffodils** grow. There are also bold pockets of **auricula** or **cowslip** in the rocky sanctuaries, and the peaks in spring are surrounded in a cloud of the intoxicating **daphne**. This is the only home to the very sought-after Hladnikia, named after the Slovenian botanist who discovered the species at the beginning of the 19th century, **Fanc Hladnik**.

The twisted trunks and bent branches of the pines are a testament to the strength of the **Vipava Valley's Burja winds**, which rear their fangs on the Mala Gora plateau as well.

When the weather's nice Mala Gora offers up breathtaking views of the Karst Plateau, the Gulf of Trieste, the Cape Savudrija, and even further, to the Friuli Plain in the west and the Nanos Plateau and Central Slovenia in the east, while the glory of the **Vipava Valley** is **right below your feet**.

Cutting grass brought people together

Farmers from Kamnje, Skrilje, and Stomaž came to Mala Gora to make feed for their animals and cutting the grass was a special experience. Some families from Kamnje kept up this tradition a very long time, as **the grass on Mala Gora was last cut in 1964**. The villagers remember back to this tradition with pride and

respect. It was hard work and every load that they delivered down to the valley was a new victory. One of the last practitioners of this old custom was Martin Grželjčev, who together with friends erected a true Mala Gora shack flanked by a wooden shelter, where he went to revive memories of the good old days. This shelter has become a popular destination for hikers. At the initiative of the **members of the Kamnje Alpine Association**, several friends and some non-members from Kamnje and Potoče donated their time and energy in 2000 to construct an attractive new lodge on the foundations of the old hut.

EASTER HIKE joining the past with the present

The village of Kamnje lies at 200 m above sea level, right at the base of Čaven and Kucelj, just 2 km from the road that connects Ajdovščina and Nova Gorica. You can take a car to Kamnje, but the bus will let you out at the parking lot before the village.

Some introductory information on the area and the ancient footpaths under Čaven greet hikers on a sign erected at the trail head, **under a mighty oak**. The path leads past a graveyard to a church and onward over **a stone bridge**, the pride and joy of stonecutting tradition in Kamnje, up to a map and other information on possible excursions in the hills below Čaven.

The trail blazes guide hikers along the path through the hamlet of Pirjevči until you come to a broad forest road. A bit less than an hour of hiking brings you to an intersection; here the path forks to the right, and this short trail goes over Planina and past Šija, winding up steep switchbacks past Kopice to Mala Gora.

The gravel path, on the other hand, is appropriate for hikers of all ability levels, even if it is a bit longer. In fact it was used in old times to move grass and hay from Mala Gora down to the valley. Along the way visitors will have their breath taken away by the rocky precipices of Kucelj and the crumbling wall of Črna Peč. The Črna Peč bivouac shelter is found somewhere halfway up the slope. After

less than another half an hour you will arrive at the hut **on top of Mala Gora**, where the hike comes to a close with a brief bit of entertainment, including a salutation and a proper party accompanied by the tones of the accordion. The experience is highlighted with polenta, dressed with lard, along with a delicious glass of homemade wine.

We recommend that hikers come back to the valley **through Sv. Pavel Ridge**, where there stands a church built as a monument to all victims of WWII. Otherwise its vast ridge was known since before Roman times. Roman soldiers built **a partly restored wall and a water tower** under the southern cliffs of the plateau for the needs of the outpost. The path leads from Sv. Pavel Ridge through the hamlets of Lozarji and Rebki, where it turns and leads back to the starting point in Kamnje.

THE PATH OF THE MOWERS AND RAKERS

The **Kamnje Meadows** stretches out above the village. These days the formerly well-maintained meadows, even though some are quite steep, are mostly overgrown; only in some spots are there small clearings, which are no longer mowed. Aggressive tree species, like pine, oak, and hornbeam, mercilessly claim any area that isn't already overgrown. This forestation is erasing the memory of the **hard work and toil the farmers of old** devoted to preserving these meadows, which were invaluable for their survival. Back in those days every house had a barn with a few heads of cattle and the obligatory cow to milk. These animals played a crucial role, as without them people would have gone hungry.

Today the cattle are gone, and the formerly full barns have now been largely repurposed. The odor of fresh manure is a rarity, but that means that the pleasant aroma of fresh cooking milk is hard to come by as well.

The Kamnje Alpine Association decided to restore the memory of those difficult times that – according to the stories of old villagers – were nonetheless full of joy and laughter by **restoring the foot trail** that led through the Kamnje forest to the meadows.

This wasn't just a path of suffering, but of rendezvous, pleasant chats, and dedicated teamwork. Those cutting the grass set off on this trail at dawn for the sweet-smelling meadows, children brought breakfast along this trail and rushed to help in the drying process, and women carried lunch in their large, woven baskets, covered with a colorful cloth, up to their boyfriends and husbands. Many a drop of sweat flowed off tired cheeks onto this path, as well. But the hard work was not soon forgotten, as they returned to the valley in the evening content and proud of the work that they had achieved.

Trail description

The **mowers' trail** begins at an intersection by the chapel, leads left along a paved road through the hamlet of Pirjevči, and soon comes to a gravel road, which rises toward **Zgune** along a babbling brook. Here, just before the bridge, the trail turns left to the footpath. At first the route is quite steep, but as soon as you reach the site of **Batgelovce** the climb is gentler. The route ascends on to the site of **Skuk** and continues on to the site of **Rise**, where you can refresh yourselves with the cool spring water. At **Koromajnk** the route turns into a wooded and brushy area. Enveloped with the intoxicating smell of pine the trail climbs on towards the site of Podplanina, crosses a gravel road and continues along a well-marked path past **Planina, Šija, and Kopice** up to **Mala Gora**.

The mower's trail is **thematic**, as hikers learn about many new objects and tools that farmers used in olden times to cut the grass in the meadows.



Cutting grass on Mala Gora; photo from 1930



Lodge on Mala Gora



Mala Gora plateau



Crumbling rock formations on the eastern ridge of Mala Gora