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Approaching the summit
of Veliko Špicje





**TOUREN
AUSLAND**

CLIMBING IN THE JULIAN ALPS

The Julian Alps of western Slovenia are not a climbing hotspot like the nearby Dolomites, Chamonix, or the Swiss Alps. Whether it is the relative lack of information, the long approaches, or the loose rock and sparse protection, these mountains don't take up much space in the conscience of European climbers. Matija Brumat, a member of the club since 2020, had long wanted to bring some motivated friends to his home peaks to show them what they (and everyone else) had been missing.

In August 2022 seven AACZ club members showed up in Soča, a small collection of houses along the river of the same name, where Matija had organized us lodging in a small hunting cabin owned by a friend of his. Friends would quickly become a common theme of our trip, as Matija seemed to know everyone – either an indication of his affable personality or the size of Slovenia. We spent our first few days acclimating to the rock and climbing style of the Julian Alps. In general there are no bolts, and you encounter a varying number of in-situ pitons leading you in either the right or wrong direction, which one you're never quite sure. The rock is loose without being horrendous, and the grading of the classic routes is quite «conservative» – none of us climbed a pitch harder than UIAA IV+, ostensibly a French 4c. However the

trip was just as much about Matija showing us the Slovenian way of life as it was about the climbing. Whether we were taking long breaks for coffee in the mountain huts (joined by some of his friends of course) or visiting a winery in the foothills (owned by, you guessed it, his friend), Matija was as intent on showing us his home culture as he was his home mountains.

Mid-week we decided to pair off and tackle some larger objectives. Ven and Ulla climbed the Nordwand of Triglav, while Clara, Jenny, Yoann, and I found ourselves on similarly impressive faces that no one reading this will have ever heard of. Clara and I returned to the cabin at 8pm after a 15 hour day and were surprised to discover that we were the first ones back. Jenny and Yoann, though successful, had a long and dark descent while Ven and Ulla opted for a spontaneous hut stay. Matija wasn't wrong: the Julian Alps are big, lonely, and inspiring. As we wrapped up our time in Slovenia at an outdoor BBQ with samples from the previous hunting season (brought by Matija's friends), we were lucky to reflect on our colourful, wild, and ultimately safe journey up these new peaks and into this new culture.

Tim Aiken

Trail running as a great way to explore the Julian Alps



our group



Final ascent of Mt. Hood



View from Mt. St. Helens northward toward the crater, in the background Mt. Rainier near Seattle



THREE VOLCANOES IN THE AMERICAN NORTHWEST

As an academic conference brought me to Portland, Oregon, in June 2022, a friend and myself seized the opportunity to climb the volcanoes Mt. St. Helens (2549m), Mt. Adams (3743m), and Mt. Hood (3425) in the three days between arrival and conference. Given CO2 emissions and jetlag, I would not have flown all the way for these three climbs alone, but being on the US West Coast anyway this was a great opportunity given in particular that their volcanic nature makes all three mountains stand out a good deal from surrounding other mountains and hence makes for great views.

We started with the lowest mountain, Mt. St. Helens, north of Portland, which is probably best known for its big eruption in May 1980 which reduced its size and covered much of the surrounding area in lava for many years. Some of this lava is still visible on ascent and descent, and where the mountain used to have a mountain peak before 1980 there is now a crater. From the crater, we enjoyed views all the way north toward Mt. Rainier, the local mountain of Seattle, Washington. Looking east, we could already study our second target, Mt. Adams.

On day 2, now a bit less jetlagged and a bit more acclimatized, we climbed Mt. Adams, which in June was still mostly snow-covered and, like Mt. Hood, would in fact have made for a nice ski tour had we taken the effort of bringing all the necessary equipment. Technically it was totally easy and we just had

to work with the altitude. From the peak, we could already spot Mt. Hood in the south.

Day 3 then saw the highlight of our trip, Mt. Hood on the southern Oregon-side of the Columbia river and the very salient local mountain of Portland. While a bit lower than Mt. Adams, Mt. Hood was clearly the most technical of the three mountains. On the day we climbed it, walking with crampons and ice axe seemed safe enough without the ropes that the many guided tours were using, but it was not hard to see why on days with less forthcoming weather conditions the mountain does see climbers drop away every year. Making it to the top by sunrise made for great views westward toward the Pacific, southward toward Oregon's "Three Sisters" mountains, and back north toward Mt. St. Helens and Mt. Adams.

All in all, it was a great experience to climb these three overall non-technical volcanoes which offered views very different from what we know from the Alps. So for anyone who happens to visit the Northwestern US, I can highly recommend these climbs, also because all three mountains are only a fairly short drive from Portland and are easy enough under reasonable weather conditions. Depending on fitness and preferences, Mt. Adams and Mt. Hood are also often done in two days each with camping in between, although we preferred to climb them in 1-day-trips to save on the equipment required.

Christoph Basten

