

OTOČAC

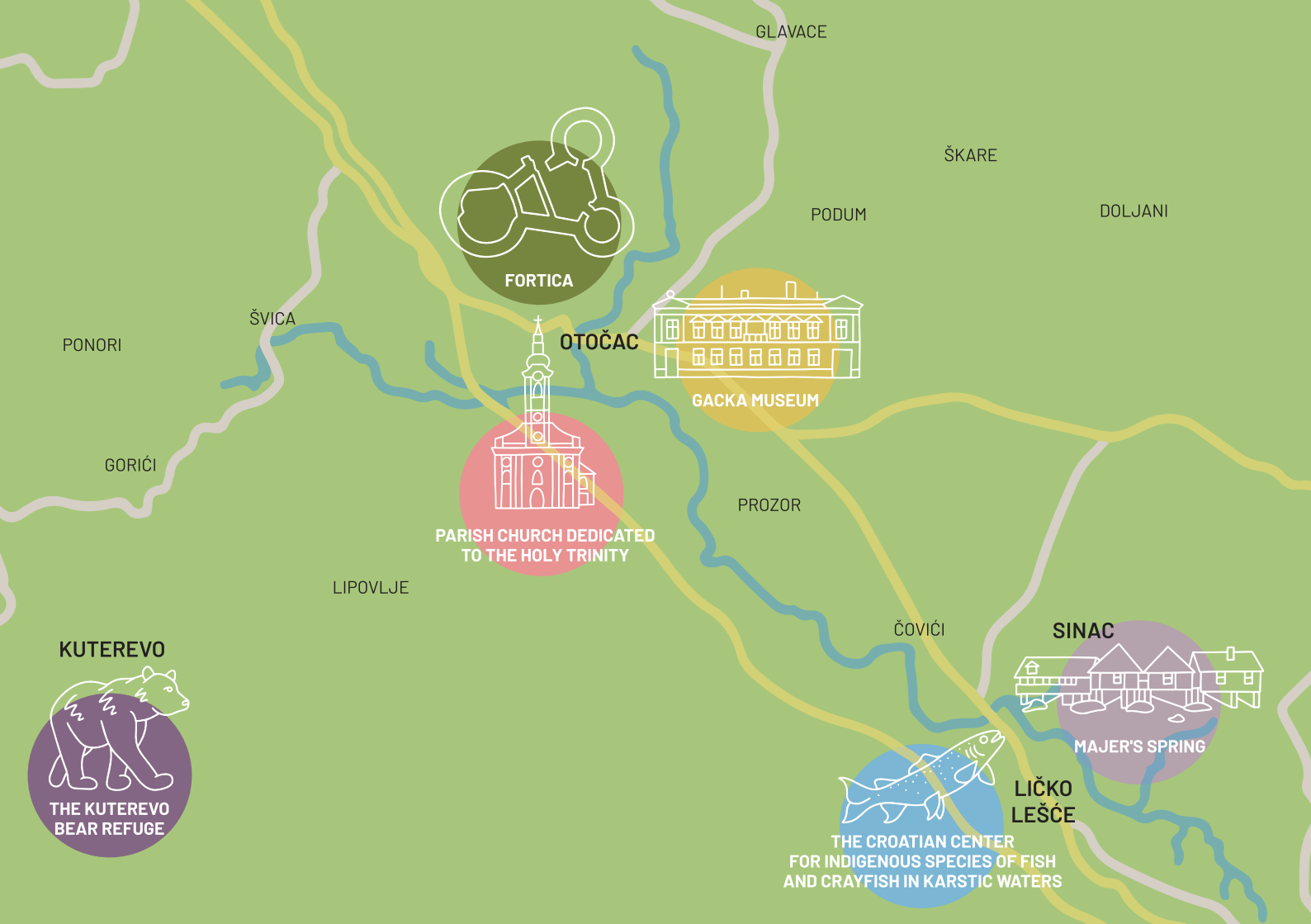
EXPLORE HISTORY

FEEL THE STORY

EMBARK ON A JOURNEY

TASTE THE LOCAL FLAVOURS





GLAVACE

ŠKARE

PODUM

DOLJANI



FORTICA

OTOČAC



GACKA MUSEUM



PARISH CHURCH DEDICATED
TO THE HOLY TRINITY

PROZOR

PONORI

ŠVICA

GORIĆI

LIPOVLJE

KUTEREVO



THE KUTEREVO
BEAR REFUGE

ČOVIĆI

SINAC



MAJER'S SPRING



THE CROATIAN CENTER
FOR INDIGENOUS SPECIES OF FISH
AND CRAYFISH IN KARSTIC WATERS

LIČKO
LEŠĆE

Welcome to Otočac!

I'm glad to take you through my hometown.



I've spent my entire life in Otočac; I was born, raised, married, and had a family here. Three generations of my family ran along Gacka, drank spring water, ground flour in mills, caught delicious trout, walked near the Japod cave, and breathed in the scents of nearly untouched nature. I watched curiously as Otočac occasionally wore new, festive clothing, studied the history that is currently carved on the stone slabs in the middle of the town, and spoke in our beloved dialect.

I'm happy to see how carefully the locals preserve our traditions as an museum of memories for future generations because they are precious. I am so proud of them.

Ready to take a stroll around my beloved town?

So let's go!

INTERESTING FACTS ABOUT OTOČAC

DID YOU KNOW?



That once
upon a time Otočac
was an island that
could only be reached
by boat or traditional
raft?



That it is
possible to
inhale directly
from the
beehive?



That you can
see a real bear
here?

That a real sweet treasure is waiting for you here – the Gacka honey trail, which includes 12 honey points?



That Gacka is one of the cleanest rivers in Europe. It has high-quality drinking water, and you can drink it straight from the spring?



That near Otočac, you can try pizza made from homemade flour, with pieces of freshly caught trout or homemade local cheese?



OUR STORIES

IMPRINTED IN THE
HISTORY



The history of Otočac and Gacka Valley begins in distant prehistory. The Lasin civilization lived in the smaller area of the town we know today 6,000 years ago, and the **Japods** are likely the most famous of Gacka Valley's prehistoric residents.

The defensive island settlement of Otočac was built during the Middle Ages; its name appeared on the *Baška tablet* for the first time in the twelfth century. The Gacka Museum stores information on the earliest Gacka cultures and the **first Japodist route in Croatia** is also nearby. It leads, with the help of informative panels along the way, to the peak of the Japodist settlement on the forested *Humac hill*.



Two ancient archaeological sites, including still-standing **Mithraic shrines**, are close to Otočac. The carving on the stone depicts the sacrifice of a bull to the god Mithras. The members of this cult were primarily men.

Nine collections that document the region's rich archaeological, anthropological, cultural, historical, and artistic legacy are kept in the **Gacka Museum**, which is located in the heart of Otočac. The permanent exhibition is open to visitors throughout the year.





In the center of Otočac, opposite the Gacka Museum, there is a **parish church dedicated to the Holy Trinity**. It was already mentioned in the first half of the 17th century, and it probably existed even earlier.



Fortica, a famous Renaissance military fortress, was constructed in 1619, and its remnants can still be seen today. They clearly show a unique, triangular configuration of towers.

A stone way of the cross leads to the top of the hill of the same name with 15 stations, placed from the bottom to **the chapel of Our Lady of the Seven Sorrows**.



Gacka's Park of Croatian Memory, in the very center of Otočac, has a dual role. In addition to being a green area, it is also a sculpture park. It serves as a sort of time machine for the city of Otočac and the Gacka Valley and is situated next to the church and the main city park. On 32 cubes, there are inscriptions concerning historical figures and notable locals. It includes the time span between the ninth century and the reign of Duke Borna to the beginning of the twenty-first century. A large number of young artists contributed their work to the historical creative journey. On each sculpture, significant individuals, historical occurrences, or cultural facts that are connected to the region of Gacka and its locals, but also significant in the larger context of Croatia, are memorialized in chronological order.



OUR **TRADITION** =
OUR **TREASURE**





Our tradition is our most valuable treasure. Even though we are honored to hold it in our memories and hearts, we are happy to share it with you. We hope to do this by introducing you to our way of life, our values, the importance of craftsmanship, and the expressiveness of our folk dance and music.

The art of creating a solo tambourine, also known as a **kuterevka** or **dangubica**, is one of the components of our culture listed on the **List of Intangible Cultural Assets**. This important group also includes *prelo* (a form of rural sociability), so as the old craft of building the typical raft.

In addition to the traditional **folklore costume**, the fabric costume is manufactured using a weaving technique that is unique to the Dinaric region, which is what we are known for. Another item from the prestigious list above is the handmade **Lika bag** (traditional bag from Lika), which demonstrates how to preserve the original handcrafted technique.

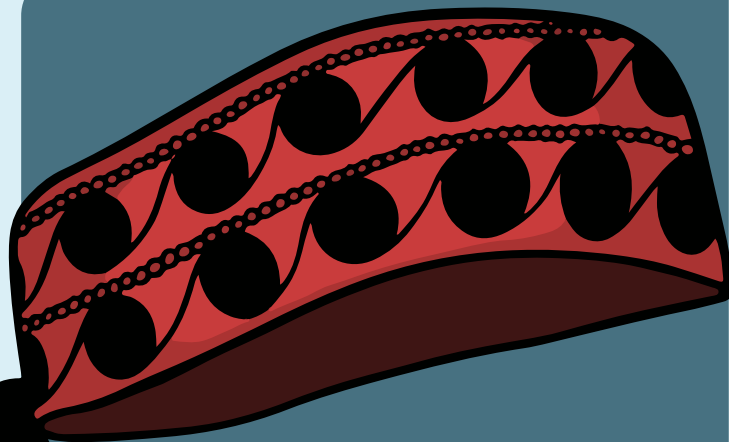
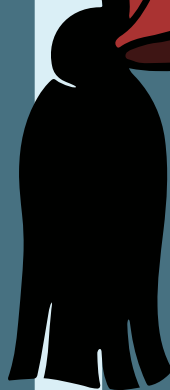


Last but not least is **ojkalica**, a musical expression, that folklore groups strive to preserve as one of the cultural heritage.



Coklja is traditional handmade woolen footwear, and the art of making them has been declared an Intangible Cultural Heritage of Croatia.

Thanks to the diligent residents of Gacka Valley and Lika, who prevent it from being forgotten by regular use, *coklja* has successfully withstood current trends for years. It is a component of the Otočac town's traditional folk attire.



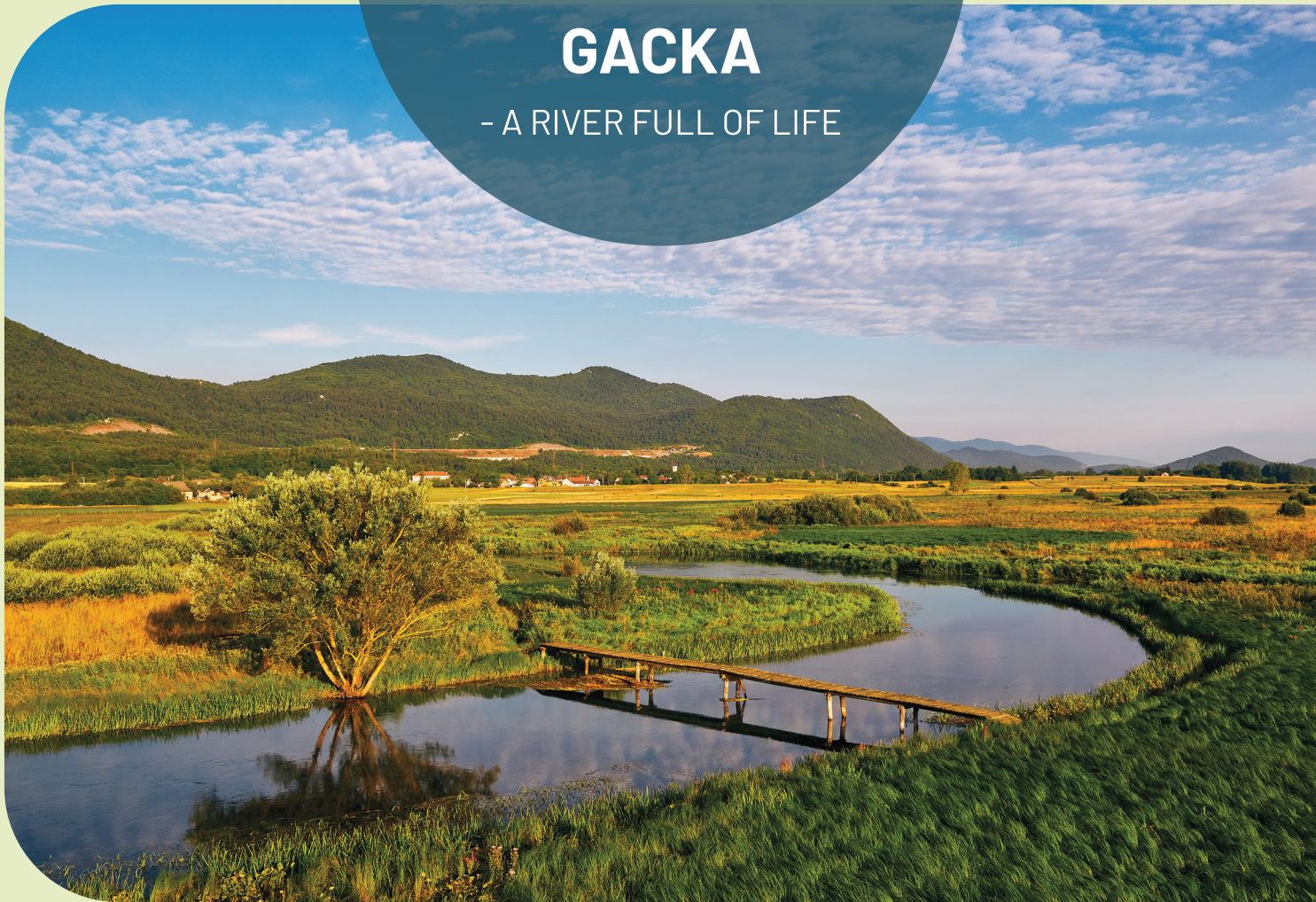
The **Lika cap** with tassels (fringes), distinctive black and red color, is the most famous symbol of Lika. A chain stitch was used to embroider the circular and spiral patterns on the cap, which we call *rabbit's jump*.

Many mothers and sisters who lost loved ones in the Battle of Krbava Field wear this cap as a symbol of their agony and grief.

Double spiral rings that reflect the swirls of the actual combat are depicted on the rim, and the fringes flow with sorrow and agony (tears) for the fallen heroes.

GACKA

- A RIVER FULL OF LIFE





The Gacka River, our turquoise beauty, is a source of life and joy. It is 61 km long with tributaries, and it springs in the village of Sinac. We fish in it, use it to mill flour, and rely heavily on it as the foundation of our tourism industry in addition to using it for drinking as one of the cleanest rivers in the world.

A karst river with a constant volume of water and an incredibly slow, tranquil flow, Gacka resembles a gracious lady in every way. It is also famous for its minor temperature variations throughout the year. The average annual temperature is 9.4°C (7.9°C in winter; 10.8°C in summer). Due to the ideal water temperature, good chemical composition, and muddy bottom, the water is abundant in plants, ranging from mosses, algae, and stem plants.

As one of the many animals that call Gacka a home, the river is well-known for its brown trout, a species of fish that lives there. It is a heaven for passionate fishermen, and because there is a lot of food and oxygen there, trout grow 5 to 7 times quicker there.



Only a few of the approximately sixty mills that once ran on Gacka are still functioning. Today, those on **Majer's spring** are the most popular ones (and, I must confess, the loveliest). Four of them stand out as particularly intriguing examples of traditional maritime architecture and antiquated crafts in addition to their ongoing victory over time, water, and modern life in their "struggle" with these factors.



Innumerable works of art have drawn inspiration from this river, which also serves as a source of solace, joy, and friendship. It is widely claimed that everyone who has visited the Gack Valley always returns to it since each season has a unique story to tell. Take a stroll alongside it or along the promenade for a special view of the old **Stone Bridge**, which links the upper and lower parts of the city. And if you don't think that saying is true, try to visit Gacka Valley only once!

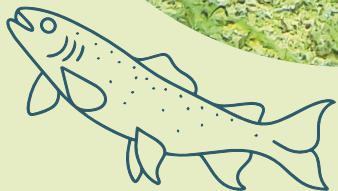
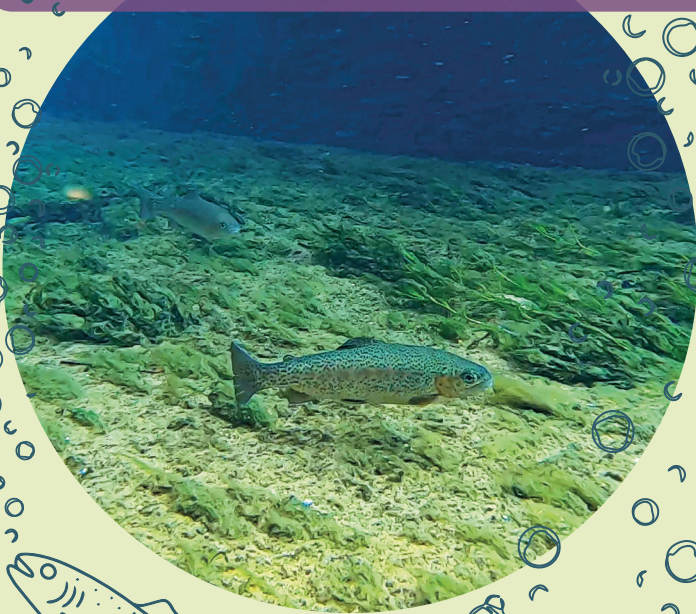


Along with Majer's, **Tonković spring** is fascinating and should not be missed. Our mills are among the top locations in the region for great social media photos.

... A LITTLE BIT ABOUT
**FISHES AND
BEARS ...**



The Croatian Center for Indigenous Species of Fish and Crayfish in Karstic Waters, in addition to becoming a major tourist destination in Otočac, is also a remarkable example of how animal species are protected and preserved in our nation. On the tour, which takes place in Ličko Lešće, you will not only be able to admire the natural beauty of the Kostelka spring but also learn about trout, including how it develops, what makes it unique, and the different types that can be found there.



In the mountain village on the northern slopes of Velebit – Kuterevo – there is a shelter for orphaned bears called **The Kuterevo Bear Refuge**. Educating tourists and introducing them to nature are important aspects of the project. The refuge supports sustainable living, the preservation of local mountain customs, and the preservation of bear habitat. Kuterevo's residents, who are always friendly, and the international volunteers who stay there to take care of the bears are expecting you.

You can most clearly sense and experience the local community's harmony with bears and volunteers, who represent a modern and contemporary lifestyle characterized by dedication to the environment.



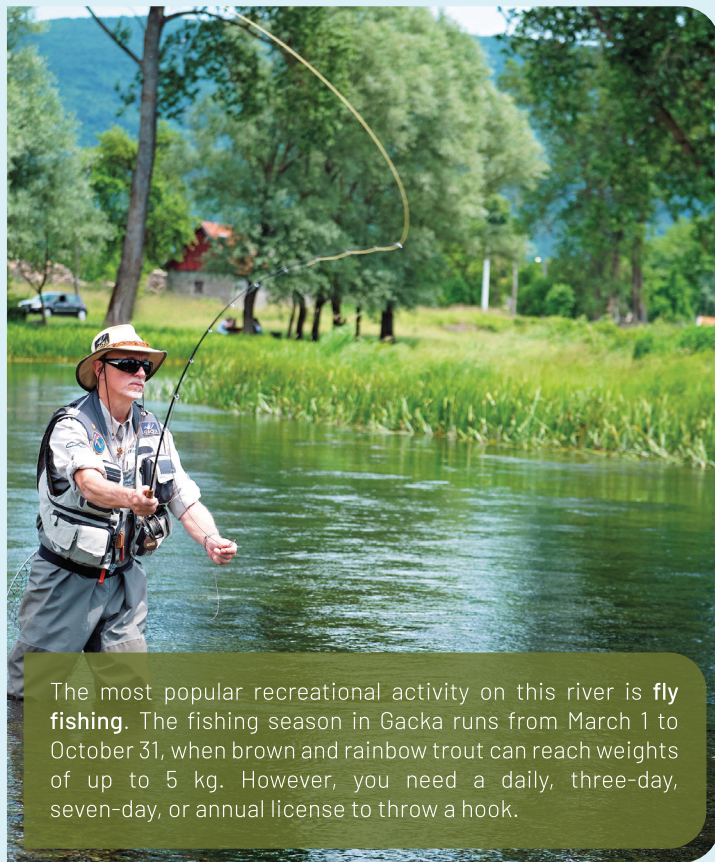
If you want to see the **medote** as they are referred to in Kuterevo, you can do so at any time, except for the winter when they are hibernating (no, this is not a joke). You can observe them swimming, climbing trees, playing, and most typically they are always in a good mood for selfies when you are taking a tour of their habitats. But don't worry, everything is sufficiently far away to keep those adorable furry paws from touching you.

OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES

TAKE A DEEP BREATH AND FEEL
THE EXCITEMENT



The breathtaking beauty of the surrounding landscape is the first thing you will notice if you turn your gaze toward the Gacka Valley. We can genuinely take pride in having almost unspoiled nature, which is perfect for vacations as well as for sporting events and outdoor activities.



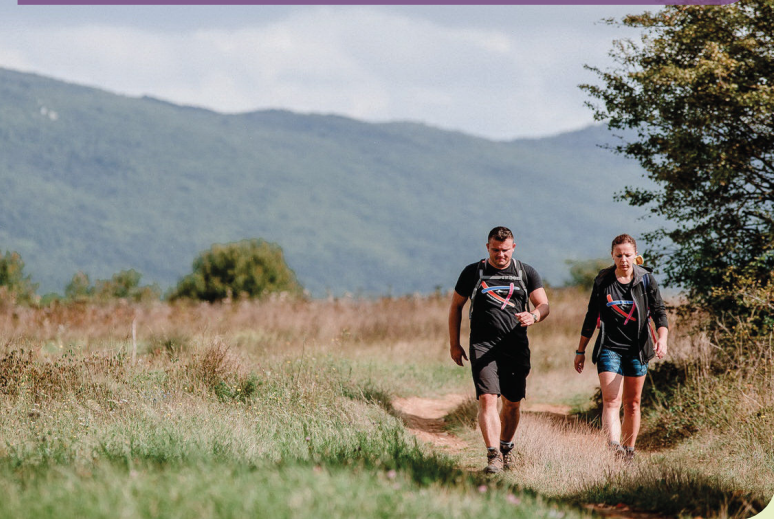
The most popular recreational activity on this river is **fly fishing**. The fishing season in Gacka runs from March 1 to October 31, when brown and rainbow trout can reach weights of up to 5 kg. However, you need a daily, three-day, seven-day, or annual license to throw a hook.



Cyclo tourism

enthusiasts will enjoy spinning their wheels on one of the selected trails, 30 to 50 km long. There are some that are asphalted, some that require navigating macadam, and occasionally there are grassy patches. Is there anything that's better than playing sports outside?

Those who are most at ease on their feet can take a stroll along the Gacka River, seek hidden **hiking** trails through meadows, woodlands, and farms, or hike on the nearby hills and trails.



The best way to experience the beauty of the Gacka River and spend a pleasant time with the family is by **kayaking** or **canoeing**.



If you choose kayaks with a transparent bottom, you may look down into the depths of this lovely river on the multi-kilometer-long course.



Try riding a **quad bike** on more or less challenging routes along the Gacke Valley if you still want extra adrenaline.

GASTRO

SMELLS AND FLAVORS
OF OUR REGION



We have always been gourmets and still are today, so we change our traditional recipes according to the seasons. We have recognized the nutritional value of some meals from the dawn of time, thus in the winter we ate a greater variety of spicy and fatty foods, while in the summer we preferred lighter meals.

The **police**, potato halves, are made with local potatoes from the Lika region and are one of our favorite dishes.

These potato halves are unpeeled potatoes that have been split in half and roasted in the oven. With the *police*, we used to eat some bacon and sauerkraut, but now we consume a variety of meats and cheeses.



Cheese is an essential component in regional cuisine, with **škripavac cheese** unquestionably being the most famous dish. We produce soft, hard, and semi-hard cheeses, typically using cow's milk.

You must be familiar with the famous **lamb from Lika**, but did you know that potatoes and a lamb from a certain breed of sheep called Lika Curly (*pramenka*) are registered as Protected geographical indication?



Even now, sheep-raising is still a tradition in our region, and **lamb** is still a popular and high-demand dish. Along with lamb, other specialties like a **roisserie pig roast**, **sauerkraut** and **smoked pork**, **game stew** served with **polenta**, **cured meats**, and **baked trout** with salted potatoes are always on the menu.



Sauerkraut and smoked pork


What would a meal be without dessert to complete it?

Our most well-known and historic pastry, ***masnica***, is also our favorite. Traditionally, women would make it for their husbands' brunch in the fields as a snack or dessert.

Along with ***masnica***, ***miliprot*** – a.k.a. **kuglof**, **cake with jam**, **apple**, or **cheese pie** – was also produced. The plum, which is the most popular fruit in our region and from which **jam** is traditionally made, is also used to make ***knedli od sliv*** or dumplings stuffed with plums.



Masnica



Baked trout

Speaking about sweets, I can't help but mention that Otočac has always been a beekeeping community, and more and more of my friends are producing **honey**, which is regarded as a premium ecological good thanks to the hard effort of both bees and beekeepers. Visit our "**Gacka Honey Trail**" to sample this nutritious and delicious treat. There are 12 honey points in it.

I kept our ***šljivovica*** until last even though an aperitif is consumed before a meal. Because of our reputation for producing ***rakija*** – plum brandy –, it is still brewed in the same manner as in the past, although in considerably lesser amounts. ***Rakija*** is an essential part of life in the community; it is deeply integrated into our tradition, and it is used to toast, celebrate, and lament; sometimes there's a drop too much, so we'll probably start to sing.

You can taste the majority of these classical dishes at our restaurants, either traditionally prepared or with a modern twist.



I'll also reveal a secret to you.
We are eating pizza more and more frequently.
If you assume it to be a typical **pizza**, you are mistaken.

You can select whether you want to try ours with homemade cheese, cured meats, or would want to try the one with pieces of trout or lamb. It is created with homemade flour, ground in mills at the spring of Gacka.

Our pizzas are so excellent that even I, with my traditional preferences, truly enjoyed them.



Which of our dishes made with local ingredients do you prefer?

- a) Trout with boiled potatoes?
- b) Pizza with cheese?
- c) Lamb?

EVENTS

IN OUR VALLEY

Gather memories and keep them in the memory chest

Otočac undoubtedly has a diverse calendar of events. Through them, you learn about this region, its customs, and its picturesque surroundings, and occasionally you have your challenges. The entire year is filled with sporting, cultural, entertaining, gastronomic, and other events.



The beginning of the year is reserved for the most cheerful carnival event – **Masquerade in Gacka Valley**. It is, after all, the wildest, funniest, and most colorful period of the year. Come to *mačkare* with your buddies if you enjoy masks, costumes, dancing, laughter, and a fun atmosphere. There, you may pretend to be someone else for a while. Even if masking isn't your thing but you're an excellent dancer anyway, you'll still have a great time.

During the spring, Otočac comes to life with bright Easter "masterpieces" created by locals and children for **Easter in Otočac**. The Easter Bunny then pays a visit because the gathering was so fun.



For the youngest visitors, **the Children's Summer event** is the perfect option. Your kids will be kept away from their smartphones and laptops for a variety of reasons, including artistic workshops, activities, performances, and summer movies.

The County Folklore Festival, which has been held in mid-June since 1999, is a must-attend event if you enjoy tradition, folklore, and regional goods.



It features hundreds of dancers that proudly reflect the original folk values and legacy, including the music, dance, language, and other folklore manifestations that are part of this region's intangible heritage as well as the heritage of the entire country of Croatia.

There is also **The Coklje Fest**, a sort of street art festival where local goods, music, clothing, and food blend tradition with modern life.



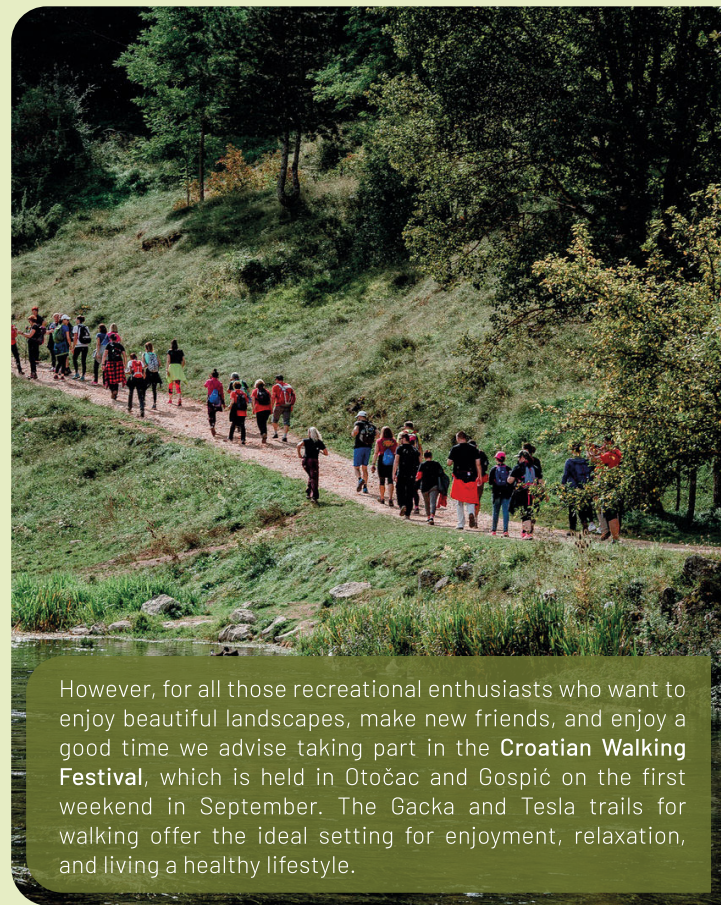


Adrenaline junkies can participate in the spring **Team Silber Enduro race**. One of the oldest motorcycle clubs in Croatia is in charge of organizing the event. Each year, this local club puts on a spectacle.



Whether or not they are professional cyclists, cyclo tourism enthusiasts will undoubtedly enjoy the traditional **Barkan bicycle race**.

Don't worry if you don't enjoy team sports; the **Gacka Run** allows you to run at your own pace. You have a chance to win big prizes if you are faster than the competition.



However, for all those recreational enthusiasts who want to enjoy beautiful landscapes, make new friends, and enjoy a good time we advise taking part in the **Croatian Walking Festival**, which is held in Otočac and Gospić on the first weekend in September. The Gacka and Tesla trails for walking offer the ideal setting for enjoyment, relaxation, and living a healthy lifestyle.

Eco-Ethno Gacka, the largest and most popular event in this region that attracts several thousand guests each year, is our secret weapon when it comes to food-related events. It has been held since 2003, and it brings together over 30 amateur cooking teams, and over 50 local businesses from all over Croatia, who are competing to make the best game stew and who will win the title of the finest chef. The entire event is supported by concerts featuring prominent local musicians.

EKO ETNO Gacka



The majority of events in Otočac take place in the green heart of the town – the town's park – which is beautiful all year round.



The Autumn Festival in Otočac confirms this. In particular, the park is covered with rustling leaves and a vibrant color palette that every painter would love to have. The activities on offer at this event also include leaf-themed workshops, dance performances featuring autumnal creatures, and straw sculptures.

The end of the year is reserved for **Advent in Otočac**, where you will experience real Christmas magic. There is an open-air ice rink, intended for all ages, concerts, shows, workshops, a competition in the preparation of homemade cookies, and a Christmas fair. Everything listed is only part of the program. When you are accompanied by the smell of cooked sausages or fritters, and you are warmed by mulled wine or gin, even snowflakes do not bother you, which makes fun for the whole family even more magical.



SELECT
ACCOMMODATION

ACCORDING TO YOUR
PREFERENCES



Everyone can find accommodations in Otočac. Choose from one of four hotels with pleasant rooms and helpful staff if you enjoy comfort and service. Those who prefer a less hectic environment can have a look at one of the holiday houses. You'll probably choose one of the rooms, apartments, or studio apartments if you want to spend as much time as possible in nature and just need a place to stay the night. Whatever you decide, you will be surrounded by an almost intact environment and be able to take the most of it. In Otočac, you have the option to choose something that suits your style, whether you want traditional décor or modern interiors. Numerous places to stay accept both guests and their pets.





WHAT TO SEE AND DO

WHILE IN OTOČAC

Push yourself to the limit, go underground,
and experience the strength of waterfalls



Northern Velebit National Park and Velebit House



NP Plitvice Lakes



Nehaj Fortress in Senj



The Nikola Tesla Memorial Center Smiljan



Cave Park Grabovača



Zip Line "Pazi Medo"

IMPRESSUM

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LIKA
DESTINATION



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