

Getting to Bolara 60 from Trieste Airport

Most towns and villages in this part of the world have alternative Italian and Slovenian/Croatian names, and you'll see both on road signs, so we give both below. Hope it's not too confusing.

Brief version

Driving from Ronchi (aka "Trieste") airport takes an hour and a half (much of which is actually getting to Trieste itself). It's really easy, and once you're in Slovenia and Croatia it's pretty too. You can find Bolara 60 on Google Maps and it'll direct you. The basic summary:

- Get onto the A4 motorway heading east and follow it to the end, first following signs to Trieste/Trst and then Capodistria/Koper, into Slovenia.
- Follow the Slovenian motorway towards Capodistria/Koper, and leave at the exit for Pulj/Pola/Pula. Follow this road to the Croatian border.
- Turn left at the first turn to Buje, go past Buje towards Buzet, then once at the bottom of the valley (and not before!) turn left to Grožnjan and right to Bolara.

There are two slight complications though: first, the route goes through a tiny bit of Slovenia, where motorways require a vignette on the windscreen. If your hire car doesn't already have one (from Trieste, it probably won't), you can buy one on the border. However, the cheapest one is a one-week pass for €15, so it's probably only worth getting if you're also spending some time in Slovenia (or already have done). The risk of getting caught without one is pretty low, but the fine if you're caught is quite high; so we also give an alternative route below which avoids the motorway and only takes 5 minutes more.

The second complication is that the main border crossing can get very busy in summer high season (July/August), with extremely long queues, especially at weekends (you can check using Google Maps – the "traffic" view shows the queue). If you want to avoid that, there's a slightly longer but even prettier way via a smaller inland border crossing; we give an option for that below too. We often use this route.

It's worth pointing out that Italian motorway service station fuel is extremely expensive. It's much cheaper in Slovenia and Croatia. This probably isn't an issue if you've just picked up a hire car with a full tank, but it's worth bearing in mind for the way back.

Detailed version

The instructions below give more detail. They look complicated, but we promise they're not really.

- 1.** Turn left out of the airport onto the main road; go left at the first roundabout and then straight on at the second (following "autostrada" signs at both); then onto the A4 motorway through the toll barrier. You need to pick up a ticket, but you'll get rid of it in 10 minutes or so and it'll only cost about €1.30. Take the right-hand lane, marked Trieste (not the one to Venezia/Milano, both perfectly nice places but quite a long way in the wrong direction).
- 2.** You'll come to the toll barrier in about 10 minutes; the left-hand-most lanes take credit cards and never seem to have queues. After this the motorway starts climbing up slowly – you are now on the Karst (Kras/Carso), a famously hard and windy limestone plateau that surrounds Trieste and makes excellent air-dried ham (kraški pršut/prosciutto del carso).
- 3.** Keep going on the A4, following signs to Trieste (which now starts to get called "Trieste/Trst"), going through occasional tunnels, and not worrying that you're passing occasional exits marked "Slovenia" (pretty much any direction except straight on would take you into Slovenia, or into the sea). After a particularly long tunnel with blue lights in (called 'Carso'), you will notice you're descending, and soon you'll see Trieste itself below you. Keep going on the motorway around it. After a few Trieste exits, you'll pass a huge Wärtsilä factory on your left; ignore the next exit (Dolina) but take the one immediately after, to Capodistria/Koper and Muggia/Milje (careful, it's quite easy to miss).
- 4.** Follow Capodistria/Koper, through another tunnel, and you'll come to the border. This is also quite easy to miss (there's no border control, as you're still in the Schengen area so you just drive straight through), but you'll see an OMV petrol station on your right. If you want to avoid the main Croatia border crossing, or avoid the motorway and the risk of a fine for not having a Slovenian vignette (or, indeed, if you want to buy a vignette or petrol) turn into the petrol station. Otherwise, just carry on for 5 minutes, leave at the exit for Pulj/Pola/Pula, and skip to step 10. Either way, you are now in Slovenia.
- 5.** If you're avoiding the motorway and/or main border crossing: at the end of the petrol station, behind the cashier building, turn right. You are immediately at a T-junction where you turn left and join a road parallel to the motorway going uphill.
- 6.** Follow this road as it bends left over a bridge (over the motorway that you've just left), then turn left at a T-junction to Škofije. Follow the road through Škofije.
- 7.** Keep going, and go straight over at the first roundabout. At the second roundabout, if you're avoiding the main border crossing and going inland, skip to "**Inland route**" on the next page; otherwise, go straight on, signposted to Bertoki/Bertocchi.
- 8.** Carry on for a couple of minutes; at the next roundabout (and potential motorway entrance) turn left, then almost immediately right at another one, now signposted to Koper.
- 9.** Carry on for a couple of minutes; you then arrive in the outskirts of Koper/Capodistria at yet another roundabout, at which you turn left towards Pula, then left again at a cross-roads with traffic lights, again signed to Pula.

- 10.** Follow this road, over a roundabout, out of Koper. The road winds up the side of a hill, with some nice views of the Bay of Trieste, and down the other side to the Croatian border at Dragonja/Dragogna. You do need to show your passports at this one, to both the Slovenian and Croatian guards, although usually not for very long.
- 11.** Drive on across the very small Dragonja river, uphill through the old Croatian border post (no need to stop here, it's not used any more); and then take the first left turn signed to Kaštel/Castelvenere and Buje/Buie. Carry on through Kaštel towards Buje.
- 12.** When you come into Buje you reach a T-junction; turn left, then straight over a roundabout towards Buzet (Buzet doesn't get an Italian name on its sign, because it's not very bilingual; although some people do call it Pingente). Don't turn left here, even though it's temptingly signposted to our local town Grožnjan/Grisignana.
- 13.** Carry on through a few villages; as you come through Krasica/Crassiza you start to get very nice views of the olive groves, vineyards and sea down to your right. Don't turn left to Grožnjan, though – keep going straight on. As you come through Bijele Zemlje/Terre Bianche you can even see Grožnjan, with a pointy church spire up on the hill to your left. But keep fighting the temptation to turn left to it – keep going straight on.
- 14.** After turnings to Jarpetar, Pižoni and others, you come down to a flat part of the road at the bottom of the valley (with a nice view of Motovun/Montona on its hilltop straight ahead in the distance, if you look carefully), and about half-way along the straight is a left turn marked Grožnjan/Grisignana, with a “no buses/caravans” sign. Take this, then immediately turn right at the sign to Bolara, staying on an asphalt road (not the gravel road going straight on).
- 15.** Follow this road for about a mile, and you come to our neighbours' farm (please go slowly! there are often cats, dogs, kids etc around); Bolara 60 is immediately after the farm on your right. Park here on the right, under the bamboo shelter. If this parking area is full continue another 20 yards or so straight along the road (which immediately becomes a gravel road), and park in the space on the right hand side of the road. Best not to drive down our steep gravel drive to the house, because your hire car probably won't get back up.



Inland route

In summer you might want to avoid the Dragonja border crossing into Croatia, as the queues can be enormous, especially at weekends. Here's another option, which is longer but goes via a smaller and quieter border post inland (and is also very pretty). This starts from step 7 in the route above.

8. At the second roundabout after Škofije, don't go straight on to Bertoki as above, but instead take the 3rd exit, signposted Dekani. Follow this road past Dekani and through Rižana, then turn right at a fork to Buzet and Croatia ("HR"). Keep following Buzet signs, through a few villages (Kubed, Gračišče, Smokvica) and up over the hills, until you get to the Croatian border crossing shortly after Sočerga. You'll need to show your passports, to both the Slovenian and Croatian guards, although usually not for long.

9. Keep following this winding road, through the old Croatian border post (no need to stop here, it's not used any more); and then when you come to a crossroads with a large TRIO factory on your right (keep a look out for it), turn **very** sharp (180°) right. You don't want the standard 90° right road, heading slightly uphill, but the one which takes you almost back in the direction you were heading in, and going downhill on a small single-track (but perfectly good) road.

10. Follow this road through a really pretty secluded green valley, past a couple of villages and a ruined castle on a hill to your right. It's a narrow road so you may find yourself having to stop to let the occasional car come in the other direction, but there's not much traffic.

11. After a while you start going through woods, and soon reach a T-junction; turn right onto the main road, and carry on along the larger Mirna river valley, past the perfect medieval hill town of Motovun/Montona up to your left.

12. Eventually you come to a roundabout, where you turn right to Buje/Buie.

13. You'll immediately pass the (now re-opened after 10 years closed!) taverna Ponte Porton on your right, and a few hundred yards after that a right turn marked Grožnjan/Grisignana, with a "no buses/caravans" sign. Take this, then immediately turn right at the sign to Bolara, staying on an asphalt road (not the gravel road going straight on)..

14. Follow this road for about a mile, and you come to our neighbours' farm (please go slowly! there are often cats, dogs, kids etc around); Bolara 60 is immediately after the farm on your right. Park here on the right, under the bamboo shelter. If this parking area is full continue another 20 yards or so straight along the road (which immediately becomes a gravel road), and park in the space on the right hand side of the road. Best not to drive down our steep gravel drive, because your hire car probably won't get back up.