

Getting to Bolara 60 from Ljubljana 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 Brnik (aka "Ljubljana") airport takes around 1 hour 45 minutes. It's really easy, and very scenic too, going from central Slovenia's sub-alpine plateau to the Mediterranean. You can find Bolara 60 on Google Maps and it'll direct you. The basic summary is this:

- Get onto the A1 motorway heading south and follow it to Koper/Capodistria, first following signs for Ljubljana, then Trst/Trieste, then Koper.
- Leave at the exit for Pola/Pulj/Pula. Follow this road to the Croatian border.
- Turn left at the first turn to Kaštel and 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.

However, in summer high season (July/August), the border crossing can get very busy, with extremely long queues (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.

Either way, most of the route is on Slovenian motorways, which require a vignette on the windscreen; but if you're hiring a car at the airport it should already have one (it's worth checking, though, as the fine if you're caught is quite high).

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; turn left at the green motorway sign and then onto the motorway, following signs to Ljubljana and enjoying the Alpine scenery.
- 2.** After about 20 minutes, the motorway divides; stay in the right-hand lane to take the A1 to Trst/Trieste and Koper/Capodistria (not the left fork towards Zagreb and Maribor).
- 3.** After another 20 minutes or so, it divides again; stay in the left-hand lanes to take the A1 to Koper (not the A3 to Trst/Trieste). After a while you'll go through a tunnel (at Kastelec), and when you come out you may notice that the climate feels different: you've now left the central plateau with its sub-alpine feel, and are facing the Adriatic – and on many days this means moving from cloud and rain/snow to sunshine and blue skies.
- 4.** When you get to Koper, leave the motorway at the exit for Pulj/Pola/Pula and Croatia (“HR”). Follow the Pula signs to bend round onto a bridge over the motorway you've just left.
- 5.** Follow this road, over a roundabout, out of Koper. The road winds up the side of a hill, giving you some nice views of the Bay of Trieste, and down the other side to the Croatian border crossing at Dragonja/Dragogna. You'll need to show your passports, to both the Slovenian and Croatian guards, although usually not for very long.
- 6.** 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. Carry on through Kaštel/Castelvenere towards Buje/Buie.
- 7.** 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 Pinguente.) Don't turn left here, even though it's temptingly signposted to our local town Grožnjan/Grisignana.
- 8.** 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.

9. 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).

10. Follow this road for about a mile, and you come to our neighbours’ farm; 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 straight along the road, which 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 3 in the route above.

4. Leave the motorway at the exit for Črni Kal, after a big viaduct. Follow the signs to Buzet and Croatia ("HR"). This involves a left fork quite soon, signposted Buzet, but with a slight potential for confusion as the right fork is also signed to Croatia (via Koper) – just keep following Buzet. You'll go 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 very long.

5. 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, 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.

6. 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.

7. 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.

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

9. 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).

10. 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.