



Trento & the Dolomites

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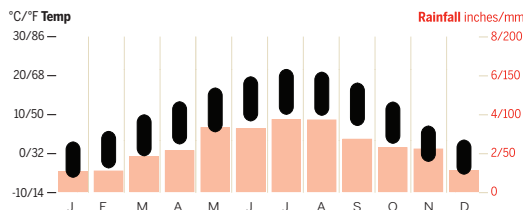
Why Go?

While they're not Italy's tallest mountains, the Dolomites' red-hued pinnacles are the country's most spectacular, drawing a faithful fan club of hikers, skiers, poets and fresh-air fanciers for at least the last few centuries. Protected by seven natural parks, the two semi-autonomous provinces of Trentino and Alto Adige offer up a number of stunning wilderness areas, where adventure and comfort can be found in equal measure. Wooden farmhouses dot vine- and orchard-covered valleys and the region's cities – the southerly Italian enclave of Trento, the Austro-Italian Bolzano and the very Viennese Merano – are easy to navigate, cultured and fun.

From five-star spa resorts to the humblest mountain hut, multi-generational hoteliers combine genuine warmth with extreme professionalism. Nowhere are the oft-muddled borders of Italy's extreme north reflected more strongly than on the plate: don't miss out on tasting one of Europe's most fascinating cultural juxtapositions.

When to Go

Bolzano



Best Places to Eat

- » Kallmünz (p308)
- » Scigno del Duomo (p292)
- » Stüa de Michil (p313)
- » El Molin (p300)
- » Acherer Patisserie & Blumen (p315)

Best Places to Stay

- » Lagacio Mountain Residence (p313)
- » Hotel Terme Merano (p308)
- » Hotel Greif (p303)
- » Park Hotel Azalea (p299)

Jan Grab a bargain on the slopes in early winter.

Jul Hit the high-altitude trails and mountain huts of the Alta Vie.

Dec Get festive at Tyrolean Christmas markets in Bolzano, Merano and Bressanone.

Planning Your Trip

The ski season runs from early December to early April, with the high season taking in mid-December to early January and the last two weeks of February (then count on a gobsmackingly ultrahigh season between Christmas and New Year). Summer rates fall considerably, with the exception of August. Most Alpine resorts shut up shop in April/May and October/November, though making a base in the town during these times can mean some splendidly uncrowded trails or touring. *Rifugi* (mountain huts) open from the end of June to September, offering meals and accommodation for walkers and mountain bikers.

WINTER WONDERLAND, SUMMER LOVE

The jagged peaks of the Dolomites, or Dolomiti, span the provinces of Trentino and Alto Adige, jutting into neighbouring Veneto. Europeans flock here for highly hospitable resorts that can't be beaten for their sublime natural settings and for their extensive, well-coordinated ski networks. Come for downhill, cross-country and snowboarding or get ready for *sci alpinismo*, an adrenalin-spiking mix of skiing and mountaineering, freeride and a range of other winter adventure sports. You'll also never be far from a bolstering plate of dumplings, gulasch or pasta and a glass of excellent local wine (you are in Italy after all).

The region's two flexible passes are **Dolomiti Superski** (www.dolomitisuperski.com; 1-/3-/6-day pass €42/116/205), covering the east, with access to 450 lifts and some 1200km of ski runs spread over 12 resorts, and **Superskirama** (www.skirama.it; 3-/6-day pass €106/192), covering the western Brenta Dolomites, with 150 lifts, 380km of slopes and eight resorts.

In summer, come for rafting, mountain biking, Nordic walking and rock climbing (and look forward to pit stops at the region's famously hospitable *rifugi* – mountain huts). Road cycling is also big: Trentino has 400km of paved cycling paths and Bolzano is not far behind.

Sella's Circle

The Sella Ronda, a 40km circumnavigation of the Gruppo di Sella range (3151m, at Piz Boé) – linked by various cable cars and chairlifts – is one of the Alps' iconic ski routes. The tour takes in four passes and the four surrounding valleys – the Val Gardena, Val Badia, Arabba (in the Veneto) and Val di Fassa – all of them definitely, delightfully, Ladin. Kicking off from Selva (1565m), experienced skiers can complete the clockwise (orange) or anticlockwise (green) route in a day. In summer, the same trails are utilised by mountain bikers and there's a hop-on, hop-off bus for walkers.

KNOW YOUR LADIN

- » **Bun dé** Good morning
- » **Prëibel** Please
- » **Dilan** Thank you
- » **Bëgnodüs!** You're welcome

Fluent & Fluid

Trentino's first language is Italian but head north to Alto Adige (Südtirol) and you'll find 75% of the population are German speakers, a legacy of the region's Austro-Hungarian past. The Ladin language is spoken in both provinces, across five eastern Dolomiti valleys; it's a direct descendant of provincial Latin.

Hiking Highs

- » Alpe di Siusi, Sciliar and Catinaccio group
- » Brenta Dolomites
- » Gruppo del Sella
- » Pale di San Martino
- » Sesto Dolomites
- » Val di Genova/Adamello group

Resources

- » Find a mountain guide at www.bergfuehrer-suedtirol.it.
- » Lonely Planet's *Hiking in Italy* details five classic Dolomites hikes.
- » Cicerone (www.cicerone.co.uk) publishes specialist guides.