



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 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 fascinating cultural juxtapositions.

Best Places to Eat

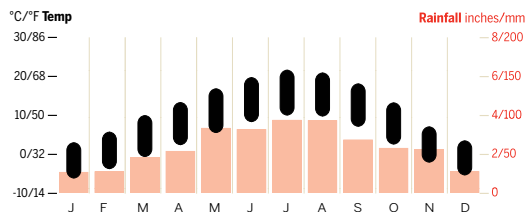
- Löwengrube (p320)
- Scigno del Duomo (p306)
- Acherer Patisserie & Blumen (p331)
- Paradies (p324)

Best Places to Stay

- Miramonti (p323)
- Gasthof Grüner Baum (p325)
- Park Hotel Azalea (p315)
- Chalet Fogajard (p313)

When to Go

Bolzano



Jan Grab a bargain on the slopes after the Christmas high.

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.

Seasons

The ski season runs from early December to early April, high season hits mid-December to January 6, the last two weeks of February and any early Easter. Summer rates plummet, apart from August. Many resorts shut in April/May and October/November, while *rifugi* (mountain huts) open from late June to September, the prime hiking season.

Language

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.

TRENTINO

Trento

POP 117,300 / ELEV 194M


Trento rarely makes the news these days, but that wasn't the case in the mid-16th century. During the tumultuous years of the Counter-Reformation, the Council of Trent convened here, dishing out far-reaching condemnations to uppity Protestants. Modern Trento is far from preachy; instead it's quietly confident, liberal and easy to like. Bicycles glide along spotless streets fanning out from the atmospheric, intimate Piazza del Duomo, students clink spritzes by Renaissance fountains and a dozen historical eras intermingle seamlessly amid stone castles, shady porticoes and the city's signature medieval frescoes. While there's no doubt you're in Italy, Trento does have its share of Austrian influence: apple strudel is ubiquitous and beer halls not uncommon. Set in a wide glacial valley guarded by the crenulated peaks of the Brenta Dolomites, amid a patchwork of vineyards and apple orchards, Trento is a perfect jumping-off point for hiking, skiing or wine tasting. And road cycling is huge: 400km of paved cycling paths fan out from here.

Sights

Helpful plaques indicate which historical era various buildings belong to – often several at once in this many-layered city.

Castello del Buonconsiglio

MUSEUM

( 0461 23 37 70; www.buonconsiglio.it; Via Clesio 5; adult/reduced/family €8/5/7; ☀ 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun) Guarded by hulking fortifications, Trento's bishop-princes holed up here until Napoleon's arrival in 1801. Behind the walls are the original 13th-century castle, the Castelvecchio, and the Renaissance residence Magno Palazzo, which provides an atmospheric backdrop for a varied collection of artefacts.

Duomo

CATHEDRAL

(Cattedrale di San Vigilio; ☀ 6.30am-6pm) Once host to the Council of Trent, this dimly lit Romanesque cathedral displays fragments of medieval frescoes inside its transepts. Two colonnaded stairways flank the nave, leading, it seems, to heaven. Built over a 6th-century temple devoted to San Vigilio, patron saint of Trento, the foundations form part of a **palaeo-Christian archaeological area** (10am-noon & 2.30-5.30pm Mon-Sat, admission €1.50 or included with Museo Diocesano entrance).

Museo Diocesano Tridentino

MUSEUM

(Palazzo Pretorio;  0461 23 44 19; Piazza del Duomo 18; adult/reduced €5/3 incl Duomo's archaeological area; ☀ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-5.30pm Wed-Mon) Sitting across the square from the *duomo*, this former bishop's residence dates from the 11th century. It now houses one of Italy's most important ecclesiastical collections with enormous documentary paintings of the Council of Trent, along with Flemish tapestries, exquisite illustrated manuscripts, vestments and some particularly opulent reliquaries.


Piazza del Duomo

PIAZZA

Trento's heart is this busy yet intimate piazza, dominated, of course, by the *duomo*, but also host to the **Fontana di Nettuno**, a flashy late-baroque fountain rather whimsically dedicated to Neptune. Intricate, allegorical frescoes fill the 16th-century facades of the **Casa Cazuffi-Rella**, on the piazza's northern side.

Tridentum La Città Sotterranea

ROMAN SITE

( 0461 23 01 71; Piazza Battisti; adult/reduced €2.50/1.50; ☀ 9am-noon & 2-5.30pm Oct-May, 9.30am-1pm & 2-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Sep) Explore Roman Tridentum's city walls, paved streets, tower, domestic mosaics and a workshop. The site was discovered less than two decades ago, during restoration works on the nearby theatre.