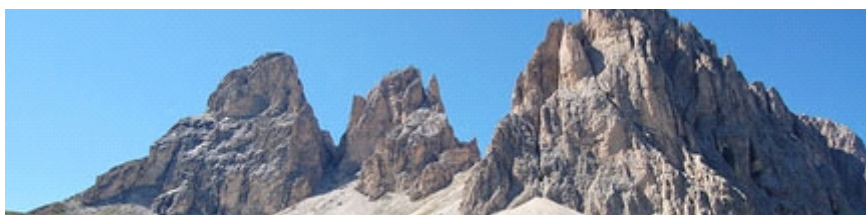


South Tyrol in 3 Days

Day 1: DOLOMITES

“The world’s most beautiful mountains.” (climber Reinhold Messner)



A trip across the **Dolomite passes** takes you very close to the ‘pale’ mountains, to the rugged crags and towers which evolved from **coral reefs** at the bottom of a shallow ancient sea. A unique **cycle of legends** has grown up surrounding their origins, peopling the rocky landscape with moon princesses and dwarf kings. Tunnels and dug-outs in the area of the battlemented Tre Cime di Lavaredo/Drei Zinnen (‘three merlons’) massif bear witness to bitter fighting between the Italian Alpini and Austrian Kaiserjäger soldiers in **World War 1**, when the front line passed across these peaks.

Countless **secured climbing routes** (*vie ferrate* or *Klettersteige*) and **hiking trails** lead across the spectacular natural landscape of the four protected areas, the ‘Fanes-Sennes-Braies/Fanes-Sennes-Prags’, ‘Puez-Odle/Puez-Geisler’, ‘Dolomiti di Sesto/Sextner Dolomiten’ and the ‘Sciliar-Catinaccio/Schlern-Rosengarten’ **nature reserves**.

In winter the entire Dolomites region forms part of the integrated group of ski resorts called **Dolomiti Superski** Association. It is the world’s largest ski circuit comprising 1,200 kilometres of downhill runs. **Ladin**, the ancient tongue of the Alps has survived in the Dolomite valleys and is officially recognised as South Tyrol’s third language (alongside Italian and German). Tiny hamlets and groups of farmhouses perched on the steep mountainsides are called **Viles** and testify to the tough conditions facing mountain farmers here in their secluded Dolomite valleys. The Ladin valleys are famous for their **traditional crafts**, i.e. wood carving and sculpturing in Val Gardena/Gröden plus Alta Badia’s **superb cuisine**, with 4 Michelin stars shared by 3 restaurants. The **Alpe di Siusi/Seiser Alm** at the western edge of the Dolomites is Europe’s vastest expanse of Alpine meadows (an area equivalent to 8,000 football pitches straddling the 2,000 metre altitude line). It is an enormously popular walking, hiking, cross-country and downhill ski resort.

Musts to experience

Dolomite passes: the ‘grand Dolomite circuit’ leads from Bolzano/Bozen across the Passo Carezza/Karer Pass, the Passo Pordoi/Pordoijoch saddle, the Falzarego Pass, Cortina and the Tre Croci pass to Dobbiaco/Toblach. The tour can be shortened and accomplished by racing or mountain bike and using public bus services. In winter the ‘Sellaronda’ circuit is a whole day skiing experience taking in four Dolomite passes.

Coral reefs: the Fanes-Sennes-Braies/Prags visitor centre at San Vigilio di Marebbe/St. Vigil in Enneberg (see map spot no. 1) acquaints visitors with the evolution of the Dolomites. Exhibits include collections of fossils and a cave bear skeleton.

Book tip: Dolomites – Magic Peaks

Hans Pescoller & Alfred Erardi (in four languages, German, Italian, Ladin and English), latest edition 2002, 347 pages

Legends: the Dolomite legends are myths handed down orally. They explain the pale colour of the Dolomites and natural phenomena such as the way they glow crimson in the sunset.

Front line in the First World War: the 'Gebirgsjäger' (Alpine soldier) ski tour is a one day circuit taking in the sites of bloody events along the Dolomite front, undertaken using lift systems and ski bus services.

Secured climbing routes: the Oskar Schuster route (2) leads up to the 2,964 m (9,725 ft) high peak of the Sasso Piatto/Plattkofel. It requires stamina (and a head for heights) to overcome the 800 metres difference in elevation, but the reward is one of the most stunning panoramic views in the Dolomites.

Walking/hiking trails: the 'Naturonda' nature trail (3) is a 40 minute circular walk at the foot of the Sella massif and explains the unique fauna, flora and natural landscape along the way. It begins at the Sella Pass, leading to the Comici refuge (refreshments) and returns via the 'city of stone' (Città dei Sassi/Steinerne Stadt), a weird landscape of rock.

Nature reserves: the Adolf Munkel trail (4) leads through the Puez-Odle nature reserve. The circular walk begins in the Val di Funes/Villnösstal valley at the Zans Alm pastureland and leads beneath the awesome pinnacles and crags of the Odle peaks.

Dolomiti SuperSki: the world's largest inter-connected ski circuit comprising 12 ski resorts and a total of 1,200 kilometres of runs, all accessible with a single ski pass.

Ladin people: the Museum Ladin at San Martino in Badia/St. Martin in Thurn in the Val Badia/Gadertal valley (5) is dedicated to the history and culture of the Ladin (Rhaeto-Romance) speaking inhabitants of the Dolomite valleys, their history and culture.

Viles: a cycle trail leads among the secluded hamlets and groups of farmhouses called Viles, remote from the villages of Val Badia. We suggest the route leading from La Villa/Stern (6) to the Viles Verda and the Lago Sompunt/Sompunt See lake.

Traditional handicrafts: the Unika Gallery in the Val Gardena/Gröden valley (7) showcases the work of some 60 sculptors, turners and cask painters. Visitors can also watch the artists at work. A sculpturing fair takes place each year at the beginning of September where all artists can present their latest works.

Superb cuisine: In spite of its size Alta Badia boasts three award-winning restaurants sharing four Michelin stars: St. Hubertus** and La Siriola* at San Cassiano at San Cassiano/St. Kassian (8) and La Stüa de Michil* at Corvara.

Alpe di Siusi/Seiser Alm: perhaps the most memorable way of becoming acquainted with Europe's greatest expanse of rolling Alpine meadows (9) is wrapped up warm on a horse-drawn sleigh ride.



Skiing in the Dolomites



Sellaronda ski circuit



Sculpturing/Gardena



Hiking/Alpe di Siusi pasture

Day 2: BOLZANO/ BOZEN AND ENVIRONS

Town culture and vinous delights



South Tyrol's 'capital', **Bolzano/Bozen** nestles beneath vine-covered mountainsides and boasts a breathtaking view of its 'home mountain', the **Catinaccio/Rosengarten** ('rose garden') Dolomite massif. Bolzano's medieval centre contrasts starkly with the rationalist style of the early 20th century architecture characterising the new part of the town. **Two language groups** live together here in harmony and their differing cultures lend character to the townscape, as well as its culture and cuisine. **Tyrolean fare and Mediterranean cuisine** co-exist on menu cards, while the Italian pavement café culture appeals to everybody. Bolzano's most famous inhabitant is the 5,300 year-old South Tyrolean whose mummified remains were discovered in a glacier. Dubbed 'Ötzi' (after the Ötztal Alps) he can be marvelled at in the Archaeological Museum. Three **cable cars** connect the town with its surrounding high plateaux, favourite retreats from the searing heat in summer. Two of South Tyrol's three **native grape varieties** thrive around the town: Lagrein in the vineyards of Gries and Schiava/Vernatsch at Santa Maddalena/St. Magdalena. The **Wine Route** (Weinstrasse/Strada del Vino) begins to the south of the town, leading to the famous **Lago di Caldaro/Kalterer See lake**, the warmest bathing lake in the Alps. South Tyrol may be one of Italy's **smallest winegrowing regions** but its wines receive **awards** way out of proportion to its size. Almost the entire vineyard area (98%) produces DOC wine. The wines are a delight in gourmet restaurants ski huts alike. Last but not least: several **ski resorts** (Obereggen, Corno del Renon/Rittner Horn) can be reached in approx. 20 minutes from Bolzano.

Musts to experience

Bolzano/Bozen: South Tyrol's three language groups and their cultures merge in the most striking way in the provincial capital. A saunter around the town leads through the medieval centre to the Bronze-Age hunter, 'Ötzi' in the Archaeological Museum and finishes with a cappuccino in the piazza.

Catinaccio/Rosengarten: (i.e., 'rose garden') this Dolomite massif (10) is famous for the way it burns crimson in the sunset, especially in autumn. The name derives from the dwarf king Laurin who planted a rose garden there.

Modern style: over the past century Bolzano's architectural style has been characterised by the rationalism evident in monuments from the fascist era - the Victory Monument (Monumento alla Vittoria/Siegesdenkmal), Corso Libertà/Freiheitsstrasse, the Law Courts Square (Piazza Tribunale/Gerichtsplatz). The new museum for modern and contemporary art, the 'Museion' close to the town centre, is an example of a new architectural style.

Two language groups: 73% of Bolzano's inhabitants belong to the Italian language group. They live for the most part in the more recently built town districts which came into being following South Tyrol's annexation by Italy. The old districts of the town, Gries, Centro/Bozen Dorf and Rencio/Rentsch are home mainly to the German-speaking inhabitants (26%). The Free University of Bolzano/Bozen was Europe's first tri-lingual university.

Tyrolean fare and Mediterranean cuisine: over recent decades South Tyrol's typical Alpine fare has been strongly influenced by the lighter Mediterranean cuisine. Pasta, pizza and risotto are now as established on menu cards as local fare such as 'Knödel' (dumplings), apple strudel etc.

Ötzi: the world-famous moist mummy was found in a glacier in 1991. He is on show together with his belongings in the South Tyrolean Archaeological Museum at Bolzano (11).

Cable cars: three cable cars connect Bolzano with the surrounding high plateaux of Renon/Ritten, San Genesio/Jenesien and Colle/Kohlern. Built a century ago, the Kohlern overhead cable car "La funivia del Colle" (12) was the world's first of its kind used for passenger transport. All three whisk the townspeople up to their retreats from the summer heat and favourite walking destinations.

Native grape varieties: South Tyrol is the original home of the three varieties, Lagrein, Vernatsch and Gewürztraminer. Lagrein thrives in the Bolzano district of Gries, Schiava/Vernatsch at Santa Maddalena/St. Magdalena and around the Lago di Caldaro/Kalterer See lake, while Gewürztraminer is grown in all of South Tyrol's winegrowing areas.

Wine route: the villages surrounding Bolzano and the south of South Tyrol with Lake Caldaro/Kalterm in the centre comprise the region's major winegrowing areas. The South Tyrolean wine route connects these villages from Nalles/Nals via Bolzano in the north to Caldaro/Kalterm and Salorno/Salurn in the south.

Lago di Caldaro/Kalterer See: this is the warmest bathing lake (13) in the Alps. The wine named after the lake grows around its shores and is produced from the Vernatsch grape.

Awards: each year South Tyrol's wines are showered with awards and prizes. The prestigious Italian wine guide 'I vini d'Italia' regularly bestows its prestigious top award of 'Tre bicchieri/Three Glasses' on South Tyrol's wines.

Ski resorts: the ski resorts Obereggen and Alpe di Siusi/Seiser Alm (Dolomiti Superski) as well as the Corno del Renon/Rittner Horn and Sarentino/Reinswald (Ortler Skiarena) are all within a 40-minute drive from Bolzano.



Lago di Caldaro lake



Merano and mountains



Aperitif in the Piazza



Museion in Bolzano

Day 3: MERANO/MERAN AND ENVIRONS

Mediterranean aura and glacier-clad peaks



The town of **Merano** is characterised by *art nouveau* architecture, promenades lined by subtropical vegetation, and countless **castles, fine residences and aristocratic country houses**. The snow-covered peaks of the Gruppo di Tessa/Texelgruppe massif are in stark contrast to the palms, cypresses and olive trees which flourish in and around the town. Merano offers an enormous diversity of activities, including high Alpine walks and skiing in the immediate vicinity of the town.

The Austrian **Empress Elisabeth**, affectionately known as Sissi, holidayed regularly at Trautmannsdorff castle which today stands amid splendid botanical gardens. In the centre of the town the new **thermal baths** provide a place to relax and revive and also attract enthusiasts of architecture.

South Tyrol's broad westernmost valley, the **Val Venosta/Vinschgau**, extends beyond Merano. Its new **railway** and an extensive cycle path network beckon holidaymakers. The valley is characterised by apple orchards, towered-over by the glaciated summits of the Ortles/Ortler massif in the **Stelvio/Stilfser Joch National Park**. It ends at the Passo Resia/Reschen Pass and borders onto Switzerland and Austria. Centuries ago irrigation channels were dug to divert glacier water to the arid mountainsides. Called '**Waale**' they are popular for relaxing walks amid stunning scenery. **Glorenza/Glurns** is the smallest place in the Alps to enjoy the official title of town. Its defensive wall has survived perfectly intact and bears witness to an eventful past. Among other attractions are the area's **Romanesque churches**.

The **Ortler Skiarena** awaits winter sports enthusiasts with 16 family-friendly ski resorts, almost all year round in the case of the Val Senales/Schnalstal glacier.

Musts to experience

Merano/Meran: the town has been a favourite exclusive health resort since its heyday during the belle époque. Palms and olive trees flourish in the Mediterranean microclimate, while the spectacularly high mountains towering above the town are popular among hikers. In the town centre the new thermal baths complex Terme Merano/Therme Meran beckons health and vitality enthusiasts.

Promenades: pathways were constructed during the town's heyday to enable spa resort visitors to take long strolls. They are lined with subtropical plants, palms and cactuses.

Castles, fine residences and aristocratic country houses: these noble buildings are so numerous here that the area gained the title of Burgraviate. The Counts of Tirol resided in the castle of the same name – Castel Tirolo/Schloss Tirol (14). It now accommodates the Provincial Museum.

Gruppo di Tessa/Texelgruppe: the Tessa massif nature reserve to the north of Merano is best explored on foot. The Merano ridge trail (Meraner Höhenweg) is a 4-6 day hike from hut to hut amid spectacular unspoilt scenery.

Empress Elisabeth: Austrian Kaiser Franz Josef's consort, she spent the winter months in Merano/Meran's mild climate on several occasions. Her residence, Castel/Schloss Trauttmansdorff castle (15), now accommodates the South Tyrolean Tourism Museum,

the 'Touriseum', and the grounds have been transformed into magnificent botanical gardens.

Thermal baths: the thermal baths complex with its ultra-modern design was opened in 2005 as an all-in-one spa and bathing complex, park, fitness temple and spa hotel with direct underground access to the thermal baths Terme Merano.

Val Venosta/Vinschgau valley: the landscape in South Tyrol's western region is characterised by awesomely tall, glacier-clad summits. The valley's semi-arid south-facing, steppe-like mountainsides have developed their own characteristic fauna, while several villages boast Romanesque churches.

The Ferrovia della val Venosta/Vinschgerbahn railway: originally built by the Austro-Hungarian government, the line has been refurbished and recently reopened with a cycle pathway running beside it. Modern carriages with panoramic windows and a combined bike and train ticket ('Eventcard') have contributed to the Val Venosta's popularity.

Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio/Nationalpark Stilfser Joch: South Tyrol's national park (16) is a must for all nature enthusiasts to experience. Ibexes and bearded vultures inhabit the region surrounding the Ortles/Ortler massif's tallest peaks.

'Waaale': Val Venosta/Vinschgau is South Tyrol's driest region. Centuries ago farmers dug irrigation trenches to divert glacier water to their fields. Today their shady maintenance pathways provide pleasant walks. The 'Algunder Waalweg' irrigation channel pathway (17) is among the most popular.

Glorenza/Glurns: take a trip back in time by visiting this miniature town (18) with its intact defensive wall.

Romanesque churches: Val Venosta/Vinschgau boasts an unusual concentration of buildings with Romanesque architecture. Churches such as San Procolo/St. Prokulus at Naturno/Naturns and San Benedetto/St. Benedikt at Malles/Mals are among the finest surviving examples from the period.

Ortler Skiarena: 16 family-friendly ski resorts in Val Venosta/Vinschgau and adjoining areas have joined together and are 'skiable' with just one ski pass.



Irrigation channel



Trauttmansdorff castle



Val Senales ski resort



Tirolo castle