

### Italy: The Dolomites

Tour code: JDO

Revised: Nov 09

The Dolomites are like no other mountains in Europe. They consist of thick layers of the mineral 'Dolomite', akin to limestone, originally deposited on the floor of an ancient sea. The Dolomite peaks are gigantic, chiselled monuments to the powerful forces of glacial erosion. Continuous sheer cliffs flank most of the peaks. Although not exceptionally high (the highest peak is Marmolada at 3342m), they are amongst the most striking of all European mountains, coloured in weathered hues of rose, yellow, white and grey and rising in steep spires of fantastic form. Below lie bright green meadows alive with wild flowers all summer. In the lower valleys are orchards, vineyards and a checkerboard of cultivated fields. There is plenty of history here and the region was heavily fought over in the First World War in fact the fighting even changed the shape of some of the mountains. Nowadays, in more peaceful circumstances, we can enjoy a beautiful trek in this region of limestone teeth.

This holiday starts with a walk to the spectacular Tre Cime di Lavaredo (or Drei Zinnen), a fantastic first day's walk if ever there was to set the standard for the week. The scenery continues to impress with new panoramas unfolding with each turn of the paths and crossing of the passes. The cliffs of the Tofana, Sella and Marmolada massifs tower above the winding paths where all this magnificent scenery seems packed into an impossibly small area. High mountain paths are interspersed with lush meadows and pretty hamlets and villages. Refuges and mountain restaurants provide a perfect excuse to rest and drink in the views as well as welcome refreshments. To cap it all there are opportunities for the not so faint hearted to stand on a couple of summits and peer down almost vertical rock faces to the valleys far below.



#### Level of Difficulty

Grade: Moderate to Challenging

While generally no tougher than our other Alpine treks, this route does involve some short, slightly exposed, albeit stunning, sections where a head for heights is needed. The two routes that are the most exposed are however options for the days when you have 2 nights at the same hotel so these can be avoided. No mountaineering experience is necessary for the trip but it is a trek most suited to those with previous experience of hillwalking and mountainous terrain. For this reason the trip is graded 'moderate to challenging'. Average daily duration of walking is around 6-7 hours but by using buses and cable cars some of the longer days can be shortened.

#### Climate

Our treks in the Alps operate during the European summer. In recent years, temperatures have ranged from 15 C – 30 C during the day, with nights from 15 C down to below freezing. Although rain and snow is possible at any time in the season, there are fortunately very few prolonged periods of bad weather. Clear skies and spectacular sunsets are frequently experienced. Note that afternoon storms in the Alps, usually reverting to fine weather and hour or two afterwards occur with some regularity especially in August.

#### Equipment & Clothing

If you are a hiker or backpacker you will probably already have much of the clothing and equipment required. A detailed list of personal equipment and clothing will be sent with confirmation of reservation. All you need to bring is your personal equipment and clothing. Highly recommended is a sturdy pair of boots with a good sole and ankle support (the conditions underfoot are rough in many places and the rock quite sharp). Also required are a good set of waterproof jacket and trousers just in case you get caught in a summer storm

#### Waymarking

Most of the walks are waymarked but not always at frequent intervals. There is a mix of paint markings and signs but you will also need to pay close attention to the maps and route notes provided especially if visibility is poor. You will need to carry a compass and of course be able to use it to check your directions especially if the weather deteriorates reducing visibility.

If you are not confident with map and compass then consider joining an escorted departure rather than opting for a self guided holiday.

## Outline Itinerary

The following itinerary lists the standard walks that are planned for the escorted trips and these we would consider as the optimal ones for self guided parties. However walks are subject to variation as a result of weather conditions and local factors. It may be necessary to alter (lengthen or shorten) a walk for safety reasons. All timings are approximate and will vary.

**Day 1:** Fly to Venice or Verona. Train to Calalzo and onwards by bus to Cortina. Overnight at hotel (B&B).

**Day 2:** 16km (6 ½ hrs). Take a bus ride and then begin trekking by climbing steadily into the Tre Cime mountain group. This is a famous block of three vertical sided finger-like towers. The route is often quiet and the climb unravels with anticipation. We head towards the Rifugio Locatelli, taking lunch at or near to the refuge, then descend around the Tre Cime to Rifugio Auronzo, (shorter option 12km, 5 hrs ends here). The descent from here is through pleasant forest to Lake Antorno. Bus to Cortina. Hotel B&B.

**Day 3:** 21km (7hrs) From Cortina, after a few minutes by bus, we begin our climb to the Rifugio Dibona at the end of the dirt road. From here we climb a little more and then traverse, with the vertical rock walls of the Tofana di Rozes (3219m) and Tofana di Mezzo (3240m) peaks above. We follow a high-level route to the Forc Lagazuoi pass. There is much evidence of First World War trench systems, fortresses, barbed wire etc. Much of the rubble lying around Lagazuoi was not created by glaciation, but by huge mines that were detonated 1915-16. The descent is rocky but easier down to a pretty lake. A steeper section takes us to the Rifugio Scotoni (drinks and strudel) on the way to our hotel at Armentarola near Sare (B&B).

**Day 4:** 14km (6 hours). Our route today is a complete change from the harsh rocky tablelands. We hike through forests and climb on to a grassy ridge to Pralongia. The strudel is particularly inviting here. We continue to Col Alti (1983m), with panoramic views of the Tofana and Sella mountain groups, our next destination. We descend steeply to Corvara and stay nearby in the pretty village of Colfosco (B&B).

**Day 5:** We have a rest day in this picturesque village; there are however some rewarding walks on offer. If the weather is good we recommend taking a morning bus up the short distance to Passo Gardena and then walking up to Sas Ciampac (2672m) this is a fantastic walking peak high above Colfosco rewarded by an impressive picnic spot on the summit. The descent takes you down into a glaciated valley where you might see Edelweiss. You should get back to your accommodation by mid afternoon. Colfosco (B&B).

**Day 6:** 21km (8 hours). Starting from Colfosco, we return past the campsite and head up into the trees around the east side of the Sella group. We recommend taking a cable car part of the way to assist in the ascent (saves 2 hrs walking). We then traverse below the cliffs and above the forests, with magnificent views of the Marmolada and peaks to the east. (This route should only be undertaken in dry, clear weather. In the event of poor weather or too much snow, a direct bus can be taken via Arabba to Canazei, with connections to Campitello). From Passo Pordoi, we descend to Campitello (infrequent buses run from Passo Pordoi and a gondola can also be used for the second half of this descent). (Half board).

**Day 7:** A day to walk and explore around Campitello. There are a variety of different walks of varied grades

available to self-guided clients. Routes for the day include a popular trail below the Sassopiatto from Col Rodela with the option to climb the peak and a bus ride to the foot of Marmolada from where you can walk or ride up to the Marmolada glacier. The escorted group will normally walk from Col Rodela. Second night in Campitello (Half board).

**Day 8: Departure.** Travel by bus and train to Verona or Venice.

## Travel Information

**Travel:** This beautiful region of the Italian Dolomites is not the easiest place to travel to but the spectacular scenery is well worth the extra effort required.

Airport	Airport to Calalzo	Frequency
Venice	3-4 hrs	Every 2 hours
Treviso	3-4 hrs	Every 1 – 2 hours
Verona	5 hrs	Every 1 – 2 hours
*Brescia	5-6 hours	Every 1 – 2 hours
Bus from Calalzo to Cortina takes about 1 hour. The last bus departs at 20.25		
Bus from Campitello to Trento takes 2 ½ hrs		
Trento to Airport		
Venice	3-4 hrs	Every hour
Treviso	4-5 hours	Every 1 – 2 hours
Verona	2 hrs	Every hour
*Brescia	3 hrs	Every hour

\*There is a bus that runs from Brescia airport to Verona train station that is timed to coincide with Ryanair flights  
All train times are available on the TrenItalia website  
[www.trenitalia.it](http://www.trenitalia.it)

The two bus journeys cost about 10 Euros per person. Train fares are listed on the TrenItalia website.

## How the Trekking is Organised

This is essentially a linear route where taxis do the hard work carrying your baggage. This allows you to walk carrying only the items you require for the day. Your main baggage is carried between hotels by taxi. On a number of days a bus is used to get to the start of a walk or to get back to the hotel. Bus fares are not included. There are also options to shorten some days by using buses or cable cars; again these are not included. The cost of essential buses and cable cars is approx 30 Euros and if you opt to shorten all possible walks then expect to pay another 20 Euros. Note that before mid to late June and after the second weekend in September, some buses do not run which effect days 2&3. You are advised that you will need to spend an extra 95 Euros in this case to use taxis instead.

Average walking time is about six hours per day, although this will obviously vary according to the terrain, conditions, individual or group progress and weather.

The trails in the Dolomites tend to be more rocky underfoot than other areas of the Alps, so care must be taken along some sections.

In the unlikely event of extreme bad weather necessitating a change to the itinerary, clients are expected to bear the cost of transport to the next night's stop.

### **Accommodation & Meals**

Accommodation is in double/twin or single rooms. We use a variety of hotels, from 4\* star to a local B&B where you will receive a warm welcome. All rooms are en suite.

Breakfast is provided at all the hotels. An evening meal is provided on two evenings. On other evenings we leave you free to sample the local cuisine. Lunches are not included. We suggest you budget 213 Euro for those meals not included.

**Nights 1 & 2:** These are spent in Cortina, a fashionable winter resort that also springs to life in the middle of the summer. At other times the town is quite quiet. We stay in a comfortable 2\* hotel not far from the bus station, shops and restaurants. The hotel has a restaurant attached.

**Night 3:** One night is spent at a well-appointed 4\* hotel in the rural location of San Cassian. There are no local facilities nearby but dinner can be taken in the hotel restaurant.

**Nights 4 & 5:** Colfosco is a pretty village with an old church, a few shops, a supermarket, bank and a couple of bars. Here we stay in a welcoming and good standard bed and breakfast accommodation. Dinners are not included but there are restaurants nearby, one is just across the road and serves fantastic food at very reasonable prices.

**Nights 6 & 7:** We stay in the larger village of Campitello in a 3\* hotel on a half board basis. This is quite a large hotel with good size rooms and a small Spa with a sauna.

### **General Information**

**Baths:** it is not the norm for rooms to have a bath, the main reason being that it takes up a lot of space, some hotels/guesthouses may have a separate room in the house

where a bath is available to guests. Expect your en suite to have a shower.

**Breakfast:** in countries such as Italy usually consist of coffee and croissant, and normally, bread rolls, yogurts, ham and cheese as well. It is important for you to tell us if you have any dietary requirements when you book your holiday so that we can inform everyone that you are staying with.

**Single Room Supplements:** are payable on most of our tours. The single supplement guarantees the privacy of your own room, however, rooms can at times be small and in some places may not enjoy the same facilities as double/twin rooms.

**Language: Remember** that you will not necessarily come across people speaking English. In this region of Italy you pass between areas where both Italian and German are the first language. So bring a phrase book or two and try some German or Italian!

**Luggage:** When staying in hotels, your luggage will be waiting for you to take it up to your room. Please politely ask someone if you need assistance.

### **What's Included**

7 nights accommodation, 7 breakfasts, 2 dinners; services of a leader on escorted tours, route notes and maps on self-guided holidays and baggage movements between hotels.

### **What's Not Included**

Bus and train journeys at the beginning and end of the tour. During the tour, transfers by bus or cable car. Lunches, 5 dinners, drinks, souvenirs and gratuities. Passport, insurance, personal clothing and equipment.

### **Self-guided Dates 2010**

Mid June to the end of September.

### **Escorted Dates 2010**

JDO19 Sat 19 June to 26 June

JDO28 Sat 28 Aug to 4 Sept