



Trentino-Alto Adige

Italy's northernmost region, comprising the twin provinces of Trentino and Alto Adige (Südtirol), is a winter wonderland of glistening forests, frozen waterfalls, and adrenaline-pumping ski runs. Deep, hidden valleys harbour the ancient Ladin language and culture, whose tradition of woodcarving and toy making is displayed at Christmas market stalls set up on the main squares of villages and towns throughout the region. Ranging across both provinces are the rose-hued peaks of the Dolomites, forming part of the continent's heartland, the Alps.

As the snow at the lower altitudes melts and wild flowers appear, protected parks, lakes, and trails dotted with mountain huts provide pristine hiking and biking terrain. The warmer months also see apples harvested from the region's orchards, and cheeses produced from its vivid green pastures. Both are staples in the region's cuisine, along with its vineyards' medal-winning wines and grappas that pack a punch.

Trentino-Alto Adige soars north from the shores of Lago di Garda to the Austrian and Swiss borders. Although united as one region on paper since they were ceded to Italy in the early 20th century, these two autonomous provinces are essentially as independent of each other as they are from the rest of the country. Each province retains and invests its own taxes, resulting in safe, clean townships, state-of-the-art infrastructure and, importantly, the preservation of vast tracts of wilderness that shelter rare flora and fauna as well as age-old artisan industries such as dairies. While they're both formally trilingual (in Italian, German and the minority Ladin language), Trentino has always been Italian-speaking, whereas two-thirds of Alto Adige's population speaks German as their first language. As a result, you'll encounter completely different cultural identities in each province.

HIGHLIGHTS

- Contemplate man's eternal relationship with the mountains at Bolzano's **Messner Mountain Museum** (p322)
- Bliss out in a tub full of meadow-cut hay during a **hay bath** in Fiè allo Sciliar (p330)
- Get an authentic taste of Ladin culture at Canazei's cosy restaurant, **El Paél** (p319)
- Raft the rapids of the **Noce** in the Val di Sole (p317)
- Cycle through apple-laden orchards and help with the harvest in the **Val di Non** (p317)
- Ski the legendary circuit of the **Sella Ronda** (p320)





Information

Tourist offices in Trentino's capital, Trento, and Alto Adige's capital, Bolzano, each have province-wide information, including updated lists of *rifugi* (mountain huts) and B&B farmhouses.

Activities

SKIING IN THE DOLOMITES

Ski resorts abound in the areas encompassing the Dolomite peaks, including fashionable Cortina d'Ampezzo, the Brenta Dolomites and the Val di Fassa, as well as the Val Gardena's championship runs.

Good accommodation and ski facilities are plentiful, offering access to downhill and cross-country skiing, as well as *sci alpinismo*, which combines skiing and mountaineering skills on longer excursions. Snowboarding and most other winter sports are also equally well catered for.

High season runs from mid-December to early January and then February to mid-March.

On the eastern side of the region, the **Dolomiti Superski** (www.dolomitisuperski.com) pass allows access to 464 lifts and some 1220km of ski runs. It costs €101 for a three-day pass and €178 for a six-day pass (in high season €115 and €202 respectively). Alternatively, the **Super Skirama** (www.funiviecampiglio.it) pass covers the western side, known as the Brenta Dolomites, including Madonna di Campiglio and Andalo-Fai della Paganella. Super Skirama passes start at €97 and €171 for three or six days (in high season €107 and €193). Cheaper passes covering individual resorts and areas are available for localised skiing, but these two passes provide the best flexibility.

Ski schools at every resort offer boarding lessons and classic downhill skiing lessons. A six-day course (three hours of group tuition per day) costs around €130, and private lessons average around €40 per hour.

WALKING IN THE DOLOMITES

The Dolomites' dramatic peaks provide spectacular and varied opportunities for walkers, from half-day rambles to demanding routes that require mountaineering skills.

Trails are generally well marked with numbers painted on red-and-white bands on trees and rocks along the trails, or inside different coloured triangles for the Alte Vie (High Routes). Numerous *rifugi* offer you

THE EVOLVING DOLOMITES

Contrary to popular belief, the Dolomites aren't a mountain range. Instead, the term refers to the characteristic of certain mountains that stretch across Trentino-Alto Adige into the Veneto, which are interspersed with other ('non-Dolomite') mountains.

Longtime valley dwellers the Ladins call the Dolomites *lis montes pàljes* (the pale mountains), describing the rocks' light tones compared with neighbouring rocks' darker shades. When you see the Dolomites at sunset, however, they look anything but pale; they glow a fiery pinkish red. The reason? The Dolomites are, in fact, a series of ancient coral reefs.

Formed some 200 million years ago, the coral grew towards the light as the sea bed lowered, but was killed off as volcanoes became active, spewing lava over the area. By the time things settled down, the reefs – separated by straits and sounds – were littered with deposits of other rocks, such as sandstone. As the sea continued to retreat, these former coral outcrops were eroded by Ice Age glaciers and by the atmosphere, resulting in the fantastical shapes of the peaks today. Marine fossils are frequently discovered among the mountains' pinnacles, towers and sheer drops.

In 1789 French geologist Déodat de Dolomieu identified the calcium and magnesium carbonate that makes up the rock. It was later named '*dolomia*' after de Dolomieu, which in turn gave rise to the term Dolomites.

Today another evolution is taking place. Climate change means snowfall has diminished by an average of 18.7% throughout all of Italy's mountainous regions (with higher altitudes less affected and lower altitudes affected by up to 40%), according to a study by Worldwide Fund for Nature (WWF) Italy. It has been predicted that in a mere 10 years' time, snowfall in the lower altitudes may cease completely.

One school of thought among locals is that this warming may be part of a natural weather pattern (rather than one created by escalating man-made emissions). Some point to the fact that WWI mountain huts are being uncovered as the area's glaciers retreat, meaning that less than 100 years ago the area wasn't glaciated.

Mostly, though, locals are baffled. The winter of 2005–06 was a bumper season, with higher than average snowfalls over a longer than average period. By contrast, the winter of 2006–07 scarcely saw snow fall at all. Scientists and conservation groups are keeping close tabs on the situation, as are grassroots organisations such as **Save Our Snow** (www.saveoursnow.com), which collates news on the impact of climate change in mountainous areas worldwide and has links to ecofriendly resources.

overnight lodging and meals. Tourist offices usually have maps with roughly marked trails, but walkers planning anything more than the most basic itinerary should buy detailed walking maps.

Those wanting to undertake guided walks or tackle more difficult trails that combine mountaineering skills with walking (with or without a guide) can seek information at Guide Alpine offices in the region (listed under the relevant town sections).

Preparations

The walking season extends from the end of June to the end of September (sometimes into October, depending on the weather). Note that most mountain huts close from mid-September.

Among the many walking maps available are the *Carte Topografiche per Escur-*

sionisti maps published by Tabacco at a scale of 1:25,000. These topographic maps provide extensive details of trails, altitudes and gradients, as well as marking all mountain huts, and are widely available in bookshops throughout the region. Maps in the equally reputable Kompass series are also widely available.

Mountain guide associations (see Information in the relevant town sections) organise guided excursions, ranging from family rambles to challenging walks taking several days at high altitudes.

Always check the weather predictions (see the boxed text, opposite), ensure you have the correct gear and the correct equipment for high-altitude conditions and set out early. The weather can change suddenly in the Alps, even in August, when it can rapidly turn cold and wet, especially in the afternoon.

Walking Areas

The best areas for walking in the Dolomites:

Alpe di Siusi, Sciliar and Catinaccio group All accessible from Siusi, Castelrotto and surrounding villages, as well as the Val Gardena.

Brenta Dolomites Accessible from the Altipiano della Paganella or Madonna di Campiglio.

Cortina This area straddles Alto Adige and the Veneto, incorporating the Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies and, to the south, Monte Pelmo, Monte Civetta and the Val di Zoldo area.

Pale di San Martino Accessible from San Martino di Castrozza and Fiera di Primiero.

Gruppo del Sella Accessible from the Val Gardena, Val Badia, Pieve di Livinalongo and the Val di Fassa.

Sesto Dolomites North of Cortina towards Austria, accessible from San Candido or Sesto in Val Pusteria.

Val di Genova and Adamello group Both accessible from Madonna di Campiglio (the Brenta and Adamello groups form the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta).

There are four Alte Vie through the Dolomites, each taking up to two weeks. Routes link existing trails and incorporate new trails, which make difficult sections easier to traverse.

Each route links a chain of *rifugi*, and you can opt to only walk certain sections.

Alta Via No 1 Crosses the Dolomites from north to south, from Lago di Braies to Belluno.

Alta Via No 2 Extends from Bressanone to Feltre and is known as the 'High Route of Legends' because it passes through Odle, the mythical kingdom of ancient Ladin fairytales.

Alta Via No 3 Links Villabassa and Longarone.

Alta Via No 4 Goes from San Candido to Pieve di Cadore.

The Alte Vie are marked by numbers inside triangles – blue for No 1, red for No 2 and orange/brown for No 3; No 4 is marked by numbers on red-and-white bands. Booklets

with the routes in detail are available at most tourist offices in the region.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

Summer pastimes include rafting, mountain biking, hang-gliding and rock climbing. Trentino alone has some 400km of paved cycling roads away from the traffic, as well as more than 4500km of mountain bike trails. Tourist offices keep updated details of trails, bike-rental outlets and hang-gliding schools.

Getting There & Around

Bolzano airport (p323) is only served by a couple of European flights. Otherwise the nearest airports are Verona, Bergamo and Innsbruck (Austria), from where trains run south to Bolzano.

Public transport is managed by two main companies: **Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 82 10 00; www.ttspa.it in Italian) in Trentino and **Servizi Autobus Dolomiti** (SAD; ☎ 0471 45 01 11; www.sad.it) in Alto Adige. The main towns and many ski resorts can be reached directly from major Italian cities including Rome, Florence, Bologna, Milan and Genoa.

TRENTINO

TRENTO

pop 110,200 / elev 194m

Trentino's capital, Trento, has a wealth of history, which is reflected in its fine architecture. At the heart of town is Piazza del Duomo, with its baroque fountain devoted to Neptune, the mythological god of the sea. This mountainous city may be a long way from the coast, but the fountain alludes to the Roman name for the town, Tridentum. Extensive remains of the ancient settlement can still be seen today.

MOUNTAIN EMERGENCIES

Many towns and resorts have local telephone numbers (listed in Information sections in this guide) to call for mountain rescue. However, wherever you are, the best number to call is the national emergency number ☎ 118. It's vital to note that this is a different emergency number to that dialled elsewhere in Europe, and people have tragically lost their lives on the mountains as a result of dialling the wrong number.

Before setting out, check the weather forecast, snow conditions and avalanche warnings through the **Trentino meteorological service** (☎ 0461 23 89 39; www.meteotrentino.it); snow reports are updated at 1pm daily. The **14th Delegation-SAT Alpine Rescue team** (☎ 0461 23 31 66; Via Mand 57), the largest of 35 Alpine rescue stations staffed by 350 volunteers in the region, is based in Trento.

A MATTER OF PERSPECTIVE

Trentino and Alto Adige may be part of the same region, but the difference between the two can be summed up by the northernmost province's very name.

In Italian, *alto* means 'high', hence Alto Adige means 'above the Adige river'. But the province's German-language name, Südtirol, meaning 'South Tyrol', takes the opposite view, looking south from a Tyrolean perspective rather than north from an Italian one. The province's official name, covering both perspectives, is the double-barrelled Alto Adige/Südtirol. In this guide we've simplified it to Alto Adige for consistency with the Italian spellings throughout the book. But in your travels you'll rarely, if ever, see it referred to as Alto Adige alone. Due to the province's majority of German speakers, however, it is common to see it referred to as Südtirol alone. In fact, in business and communication outside of Italy, it's never referred to as Alto Adige at all. Streets throughout the province all have both Italian and German names, and hotels and restaurants occasionally go by two names. For consistency, the Italian versions have been used in this chapter.

Knowing which language to use when you encounter someone for the first time can be confusing. Locals often get around this by greeting strangers with '*Grüss Gott, buongiorno*', tying together the southern German and Italian greetings in one breath. It's up to you which language you prefer to respond in, as locals are generally comfortable conversing in either (and if you speak neither Italian nor German, don't worry: many locals speak excellent English, too).

How these dual languages and perspectives came into play becomes clearer with an understanding of the history underpinning the region. Essentially, once the Holy Roman Empire dissolved in the early 1800s, the area comprising the two present-day provinces was suspended between what would become unified Italy to the south, and the Austro-Hungarian Empire to the north. Following Napoleon's defeat in 1815, the area was incorporated into Austria. During WWI, it was hotly contested between Italy and Austria, who conceded it to Italy in 1919 under the Treaty of Versailles.

With the (equally complex) exception of WWII, the area remained in Italian hands for the rest of the 20th century and onwards. Fascist attempts to 'Italianise' the north by banning the German language were counteracted at the end of WWII, when Italy and Austria agreed on the region's autonomy within the Italian state, and permitted German to be spoken alongside Italian.

Still, this left many German-speaking South Tyroleans in geo-cultural limbo. Separatist violence flared (with some Austrian quarters fanning the flames), resulting in UN intervention and, ultimately, resolution at The Hague's International Court of Justice in 1971. Any lingering tensions largely evaporated with the opening of borders and freedom of trade after Austria joined the EU in the mid-1990s.

Today, while Trentino's Italian-speaking history gives it an underlying Italian identity, its northern neighbours tend to feel neither Italian nor Austrian, but simply 'Südtirolean'. In the words of one lifelong resident, describing the intersection of southern and northern European cultures: 'We have the best of both worlds'.

Spanning both of the region's provinces is yet a third distinct culture, Ladin, which has its own traditions and language – see p327.

Even before the Romans showed up around 500 BC, Celts had inhabited the area for about 2000 years. After the Romans came the Goths, then the Lombards. The town was eventually annexed by the Holy Roman Empire and became an Episcopal principality, frequently clashing with Tyrolean rulers to the north. The bishop-princes' residence was the immense Castello del Buonconsiglio.

At the urging of local bishop-prince Bernardo Clesio (1484–1539), it was here in Trento (or Trent, its historical anglicised

name) that the basis was formed for the Counter-Reformation. The city's Romanesque cathedral was the meeting point for the Council of Trent (1545–63), which oversaw the restructuring of the Catholic Church to stem the tide of Protestantism, with far-reaching implications regarding the separation of Church and State.

Strolling around the city's streets, monuments and museums gives you a palpable sense of the history that unfolded here. Walking tours (p311), led by guides who

POST

Post office (Piazza Vittoria; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

TOURIST INFORMATION

Tourist office (☎ 0461 21 60 06; www.ap.trento.it; Via Mancì 2; ☎ 9am-7pm year-round) Information on the city and surrounds.

Trentino Agritur (☎ 0461 23 53 23; Via Aconcio 13; ☎ 9am-5pm Mon-Fri) Info point for *agriturismi* (farm stay accommodation), places to eat and activities in the Trentino countryside.

Trentino Tourist Board (☎ 800 010 545, 0461 40 54 05; www.trentino.to; Via Romagnosi 11) Province-wide tourist information.

Sights

Nicknamed 'the Painted City', Trento is filled with colourful frescoes. There's a myriad smaller museums and attractions if you have some time in the city (and in some cases, wheels); Trento's tourist office has a full list.

Trento's centrepiece is Piazza del Duomo, dominated by its Romanesque **cathedral** (☎ 6.40am-12.15pm & 2.30-8pm). Once host to the Council of Trent, the dimly lit cathedral displays fragments of medieval frescoes inside its transepts. Two colonnaded staircases flank its nave, and the foundations of an early Romanesque-Gothic church form part of an archaeological area that also has some extraordinary Roman remains dating from prior to the first church. The town's bishops are buried in the adjacent mausoleum.

On the opposite side of the square, in the former bishop's residence of **Palazzo Pretorio**, dating from the 11th century, illuminated manuscripts, paintings depicting the Council of Trent and liturgical vestments form part of the outstanding collection in the **Museo Diocesano** (☎ 0461 23 44 19; Piazza del Duomo 18; crypt & museum €4, crypt only €1.50; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2.30-6pm Wed-Mon). Admission to the museum also includes entry to the cathedral's archaeological zone and treasury.

Frescoes decorate the façades of two Renaissance houses, known as the **Casa Cazuffi-Rella**, on the piazza's northern side. In the centre of the piazza is the **Fontana di Nettuno**, a splashing 18th-century fountain dedicated to the trident-wielding Neptune.

Subterranean Trento can be explored at the fascinating **Tridentum La Città Sotterranea** (☎ 0461 23 01 71; Piazza Battisti; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 9am-noon & 2.30-6pm Tue-Sun Sep-May, 10am-noon & 2.30-7pm Jun-Aug). The

TRENTO CARD

To get the most out of your visit to Trento, the **Trento Card** (24-/48-hr €10/15) includes free access to city museums, city tours, bicycle use, unlimited public transport, a ride on the Funivia Trento-Sardagna, guided tours and wine tastings, plus various other discounts. Cards are sold at the tourist office and some of the participating museums.

extensive remains were discovered less than two decades ago during restoration works on the piazza's theatre, and include sections of paved streets and the city walls, a tower, a house with mosaics, and a workshop.

Guarded by hulking fortifications, **Castello del Buonconsiglio** (☎ 0461 23 37 70; www.buonconsiglio.it; Via Bernardo Clesio 5; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jun-Oct, 9.30am-5pm Tue-Sun Nov-May) was home to Trento's bishop-princes 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 art and antiques and hosts regular temporary exhibitions.

Near the main train station, the 12th-century **Badia di San Lorenzo** (Via Andrea Pozzo 2; ☎ 6.30am-noon & 3-7pm), once attached to a long-gone monastery, is worth a look for its cross-vaulting festooned with red stars and its bronze statue of Padre Pio. The abbey was badly damaged by WWII bombing and again during the 1966 floods, but has now been faithfully restored.

Housed in the regal Palazzo delle Albe is Trento's small **Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (MART; ☎ 0461 23 48 60; Via Roberto da Sanseverino 45; adult/child €5/3, incl MART in Rovereto €10; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), part of MART in Rovereto (see p312). Works displayed inside the museum include 19th- and early 20th-century impressionist and symbolist paintings by Trentino artists, the most impressive being Luigi Bonazza's huge triptych, *La leggenda di Orfeo* (1905). Look out for the colourful fragmentary frescoes on the walls, too.

Activities

A scenic cable-car ride from Trento on the **Funivia Trento-Sardagna** (☎ 0461 23 21 54; Via Montegrappa 1; one way €0.90) brings you to Sardagna. The

From here 15km of winding road (you'll need a car; there's no public transport available) brings you to the small ski station of **Vaneze di Monte** (1350m), connected by cable car to its higher counterpart, **Vasòn** – where most ski schools and ski-hire shops are located – and the gentle slopes of 1537m-high **Monte Bondone** (www.montebondone.it).

Crisscrossed by 37km of cross-country ski trails and nine downhill runs in winter, during the summer months Monte Bondone's pristine slopes are home to the **Giardino Alpine Botanico** (☎ 0461 94 80 50; Viote de Monte Bondone; adult/child €2/1; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-5pm Jun & Sep, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Jul & Aug).

On weekends between December and March, Skibus Monte Bondone, run by Trentino Trasporti, wends its way from Trento to Vaneze (€0.90 one way).

For walking information, including itineraries and *rifugi* in Trentino, contact the local **Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini** (SAT; ☎ 0461 98 18 71; Via Mancì 57; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Fri).

Tours

The tourist office runs informative guided walking tours of the city centre and tours of the Castello del Buonconsiglio (both tours adult €3, children free). Tours (usually around two hours) generally take place on Saturday morning. Otherwise, ask at the tourist office about arranging a private guided tour. All tours are in Italian, German and English.

For self-guided walking or cycling tours in the city and the wider province, pick up one of the excellent free *Trento Itineraries* brochures at the tourist office. It has details of walks following themes such as nature, history and 'vineyards and castles'.

Festivals & Events

Costumed parades, craft and produce fairs, raft races, historical re-enactments, music and fireworks entertain during the **Feste Vigiliane**, an exuberant week-long festival celebrating the feast of Trento's patron saint, St Vigil, in mid-June. The annual **Polenta Festival**, which is held on the last weekend of September, celebrates Trento's most traditional culinary dish. Trento's **Christmas Market** takes over Piazza di Fiera from the end of November till Christmas Eve.

Sleeping

Trentino Agritur's office (opposite) has reams of information on B&Bs located on farms and in other idyllic rural settings outside of town, if you're travelling with wheels.

Stello Giovane Europa (☎ 0461 26 34 84; info@gayaproject.org; Via Torre Vanga 9; dm incl breakfast €15-20, s/d incl breakfast €25/40; ☎ reception 7.30am-11am & 3-11pm) Bang in the middle of town and just a few minutes' walk from the main train station, this independent hostel is a welcome sight for backpackers, considering Italy's dearth of hostels. Its rooms (some with balconies and mountain views) are spacious and squeaky-clean.

Hotel Venezia (☎ 0461 23 41 14; www.hotelveneziana.it; Piazza del Duomo 45; s/d without bathroom €38/55, s/d with bathroom €49/69) This simple but comfortable two-star hotel is split across two buildings in Trento's heart. Rooms, with whitewashed walls and dark timber furniture, are plain but not without character, and the price to location ratio is first rate.

Hotel Villa Madruzzo (☎ 0461 98 62 20; www.vil.lamadruzzo.it; Via Ponte Alto 26, Cognola; s €65-75, d €97-108; (P)) Once home to Cardinal Madruzzo, this historic villa treasure is set in sprawling

TAKING MUSIC TO NEW HEIGHTS

Trentino's mountains are alive with the sound of music in summer during free high-altitude concerts, which embrace everything from classical and blues to jazz, world music and funk. Most performances start at 2pm, allowing audiences time to make their way uphill to the venue, which is always a *rifugio* or mountain pass. Some venues are better reached with the aid of a local Alpine guide – most run free guided treks to the concert.

Traditional Trentino wine cellars often follow tastings with evening concerts. You can also sample local wine during the musical events, which are held in a *malghe* – an old mountain-hut dairy.

The province has no less than 130 choirs who sing the traditional *la monanare* (mountain songs). Best known is the acclaimed male choir of the Società degli Alpinisti Tridentini (SAT) Alpine club, which you may be able to catch if it's not away on tour. For program dates and locations for all these events, contact the Trentino tourist board.

flower-filled gardens 3km northeast of Trento in the hillside village of Cognola. Each of its 50 rooms is beautifully decorated with antique furnishings, and the restaurant (worth the trip in its own right) serves locally sourced meals such as deer fillet in red wine with cranberry sauce and polenta, and apple strudel with fresh cream for dessert. Set menu costs €25.

Hotel America (☎ 0461 98 30 10; www.hotelamerica.it; Via Torre Verde 50; s €68-88, d €102-110, apt per week €350; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿)) Your best bet if you're driving and need somewhere to park is this bright, contemporary, colourful spot situated near the main train station. Stylish guest rooms have loads of space to stretch out, and for longer stays there's also a clutch of neat, self-contained apartments (minimum stay one week). Wi-fi's available in the hotel and its public areas, but not inside the apartments. Breakfast is a generous buffet served at the onsite restaurant. Set menus cost €20 to €28.

Grand Hotel (☎ 0461 27 10 01; www.boscolohotels.com; Via Alfieri 1; d from €100; (P) (♿) (♿) (♿)) Conveniently located from the main train station, this modern chain hotel looks pretty bland on the outside, but the comfort level (thick carpets, heavy drapes, religious art prints) and facilities (plush restaurant and bar, free sauna and steam room) make up for it.

Eating & Drinking

The city centre has some atmospheric spots at which to eat and drink. Wines to look out for include Trento DOC, a sparkling white made from chardonnay grapes; and the so-called 'prince of wines', Teroldego Rotaliano DOC, a smooth, extremely drinkable red.

Osteria Trentina (☎ 0461 23 88 41; Via Roma 48; snacks €3-3.50, lunch dishes €5-7) A favourite with students from Trento's university, Trentina's wooden tables, chilled music and artwork make it a great spot to head early evening for a *spritz* (aperol and white wine served in a brandy glass with orange slices) along with free *aperitivi* (happy hour) fare brought to your table.

Due Giganti (☎ 0461 23 75 15; Via Simonino 14; buffets from €7) Locals flock to this cheap 'all you can eat' self-service restaurant, where you can pile your plate with pizza, salad and chips. It's remarkably good value and the Sunday lunch buffet is especially popular. Children under 1m tall eat for free.

Al Volt (☎ 0461 98 37 76; Via Santa Croce 16; set menus €20-28, mains €8-12; (♿) lunch Fri-Wed, dinner daily) Since 1894 Al Volt has specialised in *piatti tipici*

trentini ('typical Trento plates'). Choose from a couple of first courses and five or six seconds, and finish off with *strudel della nonna* (grandma's strudel).

Pedavena (☎ 0461 98 62 55; Piazza di Fiera 13; set menus €20-28, mains €8-12; (♿) Wed-Mon) Bratwurst, tripe and hearty pasta dishes fill the menu of this Germanic 1920s beer hall adorned with wall-mounted stag heads.

our pick Scringno del Duomo (☎ 0461 22 00 30; Piazza del Duomo 29; upstairs mains €8.50-20, downstairs set menus €50-70; (♿) upstairs lunch & dinner daily, downstairs lunch Tue-Fri & Sun, dinner Tue-Sun; (♿)) Trento's oldest building, dating back to the 1200s, actually houses two separate, equally outstanding restaurants. Tables in Scringno's gastronomic downstairs restaurant look into a glassed-in Roman cellar that holds more than 1000 different wines. The rustic upstairs restaurant serves local specialities such as *canederli di pomi con fonduta di taleggio* (oven-baked dumplings with cheese) and lake-caught *salmerino* fish.

Pick up picnic supplies at **Supermercato Trentino** (Corso III Novembre 4-6).

Getting There & Away

Regular trains connect Trento's **main train station** (Piazza Dante) with Verona (€4.80, one hour), Venice (€8.20, 2½ hours), Bologna (€10.50, 3¼ hours) and Bolzano (€3, 30 minutes). Next door to the main station, the Trento-Malè train line connects the city with Cles in the Val di Non.

From the **intercity bus station** (Via Andrea Pozzo), local bus company **Trentino Trasporti** (☎ 0461 82 10 00; www.ttsa.it in Italian) runs buses to and from various destinations, including Madonna di Campiglio, San Martino di Castrozza, Molveno, Canazei and Rovereto.

ROVERETO

pop 35,200

Vineyards string along the pretty road from Trento 15km south to Rovereto. The trip is a must, not only for wine buffs but for contemporary art lovers. Rovereto's acclaimed **Museo di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea** (MART; ☎ 0464 43 88 87; www.mart.trento.it in Italian; Corso Bertini 43; adult/child €8/5, incl MART in Trento €10; (♿) 10am-6pm Tue-Thu, Sat & Sun, 10am-9pm Fri). The building itself is a work of art, with a monumental glass dome designed by Swiss-born architect Mario Botta. Inside are dozens of priceless pieces from the early 20th century to the present day, includ-

ing Andy Warhol's *Four Marylins* (1962), Tom Wesselman's *Seascape* (1966), several Picassos and various wrapped creations by Christo.

The **Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra** (Italian War History Museum; ☎ 0464 43 81 00; Via Castelbarco 7; adult/child €5.50/2; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Fri, 9.30am-6.30pm Sat & Sun Oct-Jun, 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Jul-Sep) is worth a peek, as is the world's largest ringing bell, **Campana della Pace** (Bell of Peace; adult/child €1/0.50; 🕒 9am-7pm Apr-Sep, 9am-6pm Mar & Oct, 9am-4.30pm Nov-Feb), which was cast in 1924 from bronze cannons from the 19 countries that fought in WWI. The 3.36m-tall bell tolls every evening around 9pm from its perch atop Miravalle Hill on Rovereto's eastern fringe. To get here, follow the signs in town from Via Santa Maria.

The **tourist office** (☎ 0464 43 03 63; www.apr.roverseto.tn.it; Corso Rosmini 6a; 🕒 8.30am-12.15pm & 2.30-6pm Mon-Fri) has lots of information on the town.

In the medieval heart of old Rovereto, **Scala della Torre** (☎ 0464 43 71 00; Via Scala della Torre 7; mains around €10) is a cosy decades-old trattoria and *birraria* (pub) dishing up typical mountain fare.

Regular buses connect Rovereto with Trento (30 minutes).

BRENTA DOLOMITES

Part of the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta, this majestic group of Dolomite peaks northwest of Trento provides dramatic walking opportunities, best suited to those keen to test their mountaineering skills. Harnesses and ropes are essential for most of the high-altitude trails, including one of the group's most famous trails, **Via Bocchetta di Tuckett**. This trail was opened up by 19th-century climber Francis Fox Tuckett from Molveno to Cima Brenta, and includes gruelling sections of *vie ferrate* (trails with permanent steel cords).

On the eastern side of the Brenta group of Dolomite peaks is the **Altipiano della Paganella**, a high plateau home to five small villages offering a huge range of activities between them. On the western side is **Madonna di Campiglio**, one of Europe's most glamorous ski resorts. Both make good bases for winter skiing and summer walking, though they tend to shut down in spring and autumn. The wiggly S421, S237 and S239 linking the two is a scenic, if perilous, drive. Always check conditions and make sure you have winter tyres (and chains where need be) if you're driving these roads outside summer.

Altipiano della Paganella

pop 5000

Less than an hour's drive northwest of Trento, this balcony-like plateau looks out onto the towering Brenta Dolomites. The plateau incorporates five small villages: the ski resorts of **Fai della Paganella** and **Andalo**, lakeside **Molveno**, little **Cavedago**, and **Spormaggiore**, home to the mountains' reintroduced brown bears.

INFORMATION

Information for all of the Altipiano della Paganella is coordinated through a website, www.esperienzantrentino.it.

Andalo tourist office (☎ 0461 58 58 36; Piazza Dolomiti 1; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) The main tourist office, with stacks of information on summer and winter activities throughout the plateau.

Fai della Paganella tourist office (☎ 0461 58 31 30; Via Villa; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun)

Guardia Medica (☎ 0461 58 56 37; 🕒 8pm-8am) Night-time medical call-out service.

Molveno Iniziative Turistiche (☎ 0461 58 60 86; Piazza Marconi 1; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri) Information, hotel reservations, local information and mountain-bike itineraries.

Molveno tourist office (☎ 0461 58 69 24; Piazza Marconi 5; 🕒 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon, Wed, Fri & Sat, 9am-12.30pm Tue & Thu, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun)

Tourist medical service (☎ 0461 58 60 45) Daytime medical aid.

ACTIVITIES

Alpine guide **Dolomiti di Brenta-Paganella** (☎ 329 582 41 46; guidealpine@esperienzantrentino.it; 🕒 seasonal, hours vary; Molveno Piazza Marconi; Andalo Sports Centre) organises rock climbing and guided walks in summer and ski-mountaineering, frozen waterfall climbing and snowshoeing excursions in the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta in winter. Scheduled activities cost from €6 for walking to €10 for snowshoeing, and €30 for dinner in a mountain hut reached via snowmobile. You can also organise private expeditions with the association's guides.

The Paganella ski area is accessible from Andalo (by cable car) and Fai della Paganella (by chairlift). It has two cross-country skiing trails and 50km of downhill ski slopes, ranging from beginner-friendly green runs to heart-lurching black runs. Plenty of sports shops in Andalo and Fai della Paganella rent gear. See p316 for ski pass details.

From the top of Molveno village, a two-seater **cable car** (☎ 0461 58 69 81; one way/return €5/5.50) transports you in two stages up to Pradel (1400m), from where trail No 340, which is a pleasant and easy one-hour walk, leads to the **Rifugio Croz dell'Altissimo** (☎ 0368 98 92 42; ☽ Jun-Sep) at 1430m. Several other trails, of varying difficulty, start off from here. Tourist offices have complete lists of mountain huts; always check the status of huts before heading out to be sure what facilities are available.

Riding Center Andalo (☎ 0461 58 59 00; Andalo Sports Centre; ☽ 9.30-noon & 3-7pm mid-Jun-Aug) offers 50-minute horseback rides or lessons for €22. For a gentler pace, hour-long horse-drawn carriage rides are €15.

One of the highlights of the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta is the home of its reintroduced brown bears, Spormaggiore – see boxed text, opposite.

SLEEPING & EATING

The plateau's five villages have 120 hotels between them. There are also numerous farmhouses, if you have your own wheels – tourist offices can help you find the farmhouses and can also provide details of self-catering apartments. The latter start from €200 per week for a one-bedroom apartment in low season, shooting up to €1300 for the same apartment in high season.

A number of hotels only open in summer (June to September) and winter (early December to Easter), though an increasing number open year-round.

Camping Spiaggia (☎ 0461 58 69 78; www.campinmolveno.it; Via Lungolago 25; 2 adults & car €24.50-34; ☽ reception 9am-noon & 2-7pm year-round; (P) (Q)) On the shores of Lago di Molveno, a site at Spiaggia gets you free admission to the neighbouring outdoor swimming pool, tennis court and table-tennis tables. It's an easy stroll into Molveno's buzzing little village centre, and onsite entertainment and watersports are on tap here in high summer.

Hotel Alexander Cima Tosa (☎ 0461 58 69 28; www.alexandermolveno.com; Piazza Scuole 7, Molveno; s €50-66, d €64-92; ☽ closed Nov; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) In Molveno's village centre, this chalet-style, three-star hotel has spacious, contemporary rooms (most with balconies), and a relaxing sun terrace. In winter you can keep warm in the heated indoor pool or work up a sweat in the gym or Turkish bath.

Alp & Wellness Sport Hotel Panorama (☎ 0461 58 31 34; www.sporthotelpanorama.it; Via Carletti 6, Fai della Paganella; d €88-240; (P) (Q) (R) (S)) With namesake panoramic views, rooms in this multicoloured modern edifice indeed have clean lines and pared-down furnishings, and some have lofts. Also, as the name suggests, there's every kind of wellness facility here you could wish for, including indoor and outdoor pools.

Andalo Park Hotel Sport (☎ 0461 58 52 81; www.parkhotelsport.it; Via Trento 1, Andalo; d €90-180; (P) (Q) (R)) This whitewashed chalet is as pretty as a picture, with timber balconies and window boxes blazing with flowers. There's an elaborately frescoed indoor pool, as well as a Jacuzzi and a gym. Rooms are modern, but have touches of traditional Alpine character such as wood beams, and public areas have a cosy, homey feel.

our pick Al Penny (☎ 0461 58 52 51; Viale Trento 23, Andalo; mains €12-15; ☽ 11am-3pm & 5pm-2am; (Q)) Sink into a big, comfy booth at this relaxed restaurant on the edge of Andalo to feast on traditional Trentino specialties such as spinach dumplings, and both lake and ocean fish. All the bread here is homemade – if you can't decide, try a mixed basket that includes whole-grain bread, crusty white-flour bread, and delicious still-warm potato bread. Al Penny also has a handful of rooms and apartments with prices available on request.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Trentino Trasporti (☎ 0461 82 10 00; www.ttspa.it in Italian) runs buses between all five villages and Trento (€2.90 to €3.30, 3½ hours, up to nine daily) and services to Madonna di Campiglio (€8.60) and Riva del Garda (€5.60) on Lago di Garda.

Free ski buses serve the area in winter. Stops are clearly marked; tourist offices have schedules.

Madonna di Campiglio & Pinzolo

With its pretty village square, glamorous après-ski scene and formidable slopes on the northwestern side of the Brenta Dolomites, Madonna di Campiglio (population 600, elevation 1522m) has a justifiable reputation as one of the Alps' most desirable resorts. Austrian emperor Franz Joseph and his wife were frequent visitors to Madonna at the end of the 19th century – an era relived in late February when fireworks blaze and costumed

pageants waltz through town during the annual Habsburg Carnival.

Less-expensive Pinzolo (population 2000, elevation 800m), 16km south, has a lively centre populated by residents year-round.

INFORMATION

Guardia Medica (☎ 0465 44 05 38, 0465 80 16 00)

Emergency doctor.

Madonna tourist office (☎ 0465 44 75 01; www.campiglio.to; Via Pradalago 4; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-1pm Sun)

Pinzolo tourist office (☎ 0465 50 10 07; www.pinzolo.to; Piazzale Ciciamimo; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 9am-12.30pm Sun)

Tourist medical service (☎ 0465 44 30 73; ☎ early Dec-Easter & mid-Jun-mid-Sep).

SIGHTS & ACTIVITIES

A network of chairlifts and several **cable cars** (☎ 0465 44 77 44) take skiers and boarders from Madonna to its numerous ski runs and a snowboarding park (with half-pipe, slide park and boarder cross) in winter, and to walking and mountain-biking trails in summer. In Pinzolo there is just one **cable car** (☎ 0465 50 12 56; www.funiviepinzolo.it in Italian; Via Nepomuceno Bolognini 84; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-6pm mid-Dec-Apr & Jun-mid-Sep), which climbs the mountain to 2100m-high Doss del Sabion (one way/return €5/8, 20 minutes), stopping at midstation Pra Rodont (1530m; one way/return €5/6, 10 minutes) en route. Mountain bikes can be hired at this cable-car station in summer.

PARCO NATURALE ADAMELLO-BRENTA & ITS BEARS

This wild and beautiful area – encompassing more than 80 lakes and the vast Adamello glacier – was once home to the Alps' only brown bears. It became a protected area in 1967 and a provincial park in 1988. By that time, bear numbers had dwindled to just three, partly because their habitat had been destroyed, and partly because they'd been shot by farmers clinging onto making a living from dairy farming.

Beginning in 1999, park authorities set about reintroducing the bears, bringing 10 Alpine brown bears over from Slovenia. The first cubs were born in the park in 2002, and there have been cubs born every winter since, with a total of 20 bears inhabiting the park at the time of writing.

The brown bears measure 1.2m when on all four paws, and over 2m when standing; they weigh anywhere from 100kg to 250kg depending on the season. They're closely monitored by park authorities via radio collars, and some can be viewed at the enclosure outside the **Centro Visitatori Spormaggiore** (☎ 0461 65 36 22; Via Alt Spaur 6; bear enclosure €2 Jun-Sep, free Oct-May; ☎ 9.30am-12.30pm & 3-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 10am-noon & 2-6pm Sat & Sun) in Spormaggiore, 15km northeast of Molveno. The centre has some excellent exhibits about the bears' reintroduction, including some cute displays for kids. It's hoped that in 50 to 100 years there will once again be bears all over the Alps.

Of course, happy bears often mean unhappy farmers, but Trentino's provincial government pays for farmers to install electric fences and for any damage the bears cause.

Bears aside, the 620-sq-km park – Trentino's largest protected area – is also home to ibex, red deer, marmots and chamois and 82 bird species, along with 1200 different species of mountain flowers, including two (*Nigritella luschnanniae* and *Eryshimum auranthiacum*) that are unique to the area.

Wildlife is prevalent around the banks of **Lago di Tovel**, set deep in a forest some 30km north of Spormaggiore in the park's heart. Until the 1960s the lake was blood red, due to a rare algae, but inexplicably turned clear and has never gone back, even though the algae is still present. An easy one-hour walking trail encircles the lake. The lakeside **visitors centre** (☎ 0463 45 10 33; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Jul & Aug, 9am-1pm & 2-6pm Sat & Sun Sep) has extensive information on other walks in the park.

More information on the park, including mountain huts, Alpine guides, maps and itineraries, as well as ecofriendly accommodation adhering to strict environmental guidelines, can be obtained in Sant'Antonio di Mavignola, 7km south of Madonna di Campiglio, from the helpful **visitors centre** (☎ 9am-noon & 4-8pm Apr-Sep) or from the **park headquarters** (☎ 0465 80 66 66; www.pnb.it in Italian; Via Nazionale 12; ☎ 8.30am-noon & 2-7pm Jul & Aug, 8.30am-noon & 4-6pm Mon-Fri Sep-Jun) a few kilometres south in Strembo (population 440).

In winter, a one-/three-/six-day **ski pass** for Madonna di Campiglio costs €32/93/161 (high season €39/95/170). The Super Skirama Dolomiti Adamello-Brenta pass covers both resorts, as well as others in the valley including the Altipiano della Paganella area; for three/seven days it costs €97/182 (high season €107/207), but there are numerous pass options available.

Opportunities for independent walkers are infinite. Madonna's tourist office teams up with the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta to run particularly lovely guided walks (€15) to a traditional Alpine pasture hut in the national park on Wednesday from mid-July to September. The tourist office also arranges a number of other summertime walks and cultural and artistic events under the banner 'Mystery of the Mountains', providing an insight into the geology of the Dolomite peaks and their relationship with the surrounding mountains (see the boxed text, p306).

In Campo Carlo Magno, 2km north of Madonna, the **Cabinovia Grostè** (one way/return €9/14; ☎ 8.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm mid-Dec-Apr & Jun-mid-Sep) cable car takes walkers up, in two stages, to the Passo Grostè (2440m), from where you can set off into the Brenta Dolomites. The Via Bocchetta di Tuckett (trail No 305) – the *via ferrata* for which the Brenta group is famous – also leaves from the cable-car station. Only experienced mountaineers with the correct equipment should attempt it. Otherwise, take trail No 316 to **Rifugio del Tuckett** (☎ 0464 44 12 26; ☎ mid-Jun-mid-Sep) and Q Sella (2271m). From there take trail No 328 and then No 318 to the **Rifugio Brentei** (☎ 0465 44 12 44) at 2182m. All trails heading higher into the group from this point cross glaciers and need special equipment.

Pinzolo's 16th-century **Chiesa di San Vigilio** merits a visit for its external mural *La danza macabra* (The Dance of Death). North of Pin-

zolo is the entrance to the **Val di Genova**, often described as one of the Alps' most beautiful valleys. A series of spectacular waterfalls along the way enhances its reputation as great walking country. Four mountain huts strung out along the valley floor make overnight stays an option – Pinzolo's tourist office has details.

SLEEPING & EATING

There are few budget options in Madonna and most insist on full or half board, and there may be a minimum stay during peak times.

Most hotels in the area (including residential Pinzolo) open from early or mid-December to Easter, and mid-June to mid-September.

Camping Parco Adamello (☎ 0465 50 17 93; www.campingparcoadamello.it; Carisolo; per person €8-9, tent & car €12-18; ☎ year-round; Ⓟ) Beautifully situated within the Parco Naturale Adamello-Brenta, 1km north of Pinzolo, this camping ground is a natural starting point for outdoor adventures such as skiing, snowshoeing, walking and biking, while you breathe in the pure mountain air.

Hotel Bellavista (☎ 0465 50 11 64; www.bellavistanet.com; in Italian; Pinzolo; s/d from €47/80, half board per person per week €273-406; ☎ year-round; Ⓟ) Pinzolo's 57-room 'Beautiful View' hotel – one of the few hotels to open all year – is a modern place with plain but clean and comfortable rooms done out with a lot of brown wood. The hearty local fare dished up at its restaurant will sustain you on the slopes.

Hotel Crozzon (☎ 0465 44 22 22; www.hotelcrozzon.com; Viale Dolomiti di Brenta 96, Madonna; s half board €50-90, d €120-280; Ⓟ) This friendly hotel offers bright, clean rooms (some with mountain views). Full board at the onsite restaurant costs just an extra €10 per person. Dinner is served by candlelight in winter; in summer, guests can dine at the hotel's little chalet in the mountains.

Obersler Design Hotel (☎ 0465 44 11 36; www.hotelobersler.it; Via Monte Spinale 27, Madonna; d half board €160-460; Ⓟ ☎ ☎) Madonna's uberhip hotel sits right at the bottom of the Spinale ski lift, and blends the traditional charm of a mountain hideaway with cutting-edge décor, a decadent wellness centre and restaurant meals presented like works of art. Even if you're not staying here, drop by the retro-space-age chalet/bar, **Ober 1** (☎ 10am-2am), which looks like the Jetsons just landed in Madonna. Live music plays on Friday night, DJs spin on Saturday, and there's a sushi bar, as well as a thumping sound system.

PAPIER-MÂCHÉ & POETRY

Take time out from Madonna's slopes to visit the showroom of papier-mâché artist Francesco Baietti, **Officina del Sole** (☎ 046 544 28 94; www.officinadelsole.com; Piazza Righi 11, Madonna; ☎ 10am-noon & 3-6pm year-round). Each of Francesco's individually named, hand-made objects is a one-off design; and his papier-mâché jewellery pieces come with a poem penned specially by the artist.

GETTING THERE & AWAY

Madonna di Campiglio and Pinzolo are accessible year-round by bus from Trento (€8, 1½ hours, five daily) and Milan (€12, 3¼ hours, one daily), as well as Brescia.

From mid-December to mid-April **ski-shuttle buses** run to and from Madonna and Pinzolo once a week from Milan's Malpensa and Linate airports via Bergamo's airport (one way €36), and Verona's Villafranca airport via Brescia's airport (one way €30).

VAL DI NON, VAL DI SOLE & VALLE DI PEIO

Sprawling across this trio of valleys is part of the 1346-sq-km **Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio** (☎ 0469 030 46; www.parks.it/parco.nazionale.stelvio), which is scattered with traditional villages and roamed by wildlife including roe and red deer. The main visitor centre in Malè has information on exploring the park, including ranger-led tours. See also p326 for details of the park on the Alto Adige side.

GETTING THERE & AROUND

Ferrovia Trento-Malè buses (☎ 0463 90 11 50) connect Peio Terme with Madonna di Campiglio and Malè. Malè is on the Trento-Comezzadure train line (€5, 1½ hours, eight daily). A **cable car** (one way €5) ferries skiers and walkers up the mountainside from the train station.

Free **ski buses** loop around the area in winter; tourist offices have schedules.

Val di Non

With its orchards, lush grazing pastures and castles, the **Val di Non** is picturesque any time of year, and especially when clouds of white apple blossoms bloom in spring. The valley is centred on its main town, **Cles**, whose **tourist office** (☎ 0463 42 13 76; Corso Dante 30; ☹ 9am-noon Mon, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Tue-Sat) is just off the main road through town.

On Cles' main road, you can watch videos, taste apples, take cooking lessons and tour the apple processing plant of **Melinda Mondo** (☎ 0463 46 92 99; Cles; mondomelinda@melinda.it; tour prices on request; ☹ office 9am-1pm & 3-7pm Tue-Sat), famed for its golden delicious apples. In summer you can also take a guided cycling trip through the orchards on Melinda's mountain bikes, and if you're here in September or October, you can help with the harvest. Next door to Melinda Mondo is **Trentingrana** (☎ 0463 46 94 56; www.trentingrana.it; Cles; tour prices & hours on

request), where 'Parmesan-style' Grana cheese is made; its factory can also be toured.

Val di Sole

West from Cles, the scenic S42 brings motorists into the **Val di Sole**, an aptly sunlit valley that traces the course of the Noce. The **Malè tourist office** (☎ 0463 90 12 80; www.valdisole.net; Piazza Regina Elena 19; ☹ 9am-noon & 3.30-6.30pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon Sun) has extensive information on the entire valley, and can advise you on walking trails and ski facilities in the area.

The river provides its own thrills and spills. **Centro Rafting Val di Sole** (☎ 0463 97 32 78; www.raftingcenter.it; Via Gole 105, Dimaro; ☹ Jun-Sep) runs rafting trips (€37 for 11km, up to €75 for an explorers' rafting session), as well as kayaking, downhill mountain biking, canyoning, Nordic walking and other outdoor pursuits.

Surpick Dolomiti Camping Village (☎ 0463 97 43 32; www.campingdolomiti.com; Via Gole 105; 2 adults, tent & car €21-29, 2-person bungalow €38-65, 2-person apt incl breakfast €50-84; ☹ mid-May-mid-Oct & Dec-Easter; ☎ ☹ ☹ ☹), riverside and adjacent to the rafting centre, is surely the camping ground that has everything. In addition to camp sites (wi-fi'd, no less), there are 20 gleaming, new bungalows, and nine beautifully decorated apartments in a timber chalet. Among its scads of onsite facilities are a wellness centre, indoor and outdoor pools, volleyball courts and trampolines. Guests and nonguests can recharge at the Dolomiti's excellent **restaurant** (mains €7-12), which has mountainous portions of food, including pizzas topped with smoked trout and walnuts. The camping ground is 1km east of the train station and cable car at Comezzadure.

For a more bucolic experience, **Agritur Fior di Bosco** (☎ 0462 91 00 02; Vallfioriana; prices & dates by arrangement; ☎) is a delightful **agriturismo** (farm stay accommodation) serving organic farm products, including cheese from its own dairy (you can even have a hand in processing the milk). You'll need your own wheels to get here.

Valle di Peio

From **Peio Terme** (1393m) in the **Valle di Peio**, chairlifts operate to the Rifugio Doss dei Cemabri (2400m), from where expert mountaineers scale great heights to reach Monte Vioz (3645m) and the edge of the Forni glacier. In the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio, the village of Peio is home to the area's last **cooperative dairy**

(Il Caprino di Pejo; Pejo; guided visit €2), in an ancient stone building; tours (including a tasting) can be booked through park offices. Pejo also has a small **tourist office** (☎ 0463 75 31 00; pejo@valdisole.net; Pejo; ☹ hours vary).

PALE DI SAN MARTINO & VAL DI FIEMME

Whizzing east on the Brenner motorway (A22) brings you up against the Pale di San Martino (elevation 1467m), a luminous group of Dolomite mountains. The mountains are embraced by the **Parco Naturale Paneveggio-Pale di San Martino** (☎ 0439 76 88 59; parcopan.org; Via Laghetto, San Martino), home to roe deer, chamois, marmots, wildfowl and birds of prey such as the golden eagle. At the park's impressive headquarters in the 1853-built **Villa Welsperg** (☹ 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5pm) in Val Canali, suspended aquariums illustrate the park's water life and there are exhibitions dedicated to the flora and fauna. To get to the villa, follow the southbound S50 from San Martino di Castrozza for 14km and at the village of Fiera di Primiero bear east along a narrow road for a couple of kilometres. After the hamlet of Tonadico, bear left (north) to the villa.

At the park's feet huddles **San Martino di Castrozza**, a small but popular Trentino skiing resort and walking spot. Equally appealing, and offering more facilities, is **Cavalese** (population 3600; elevation 1000m), a small town wedged in the floor of the Val di Fiemme from where skiers take a cable car up to the Cermis ski area (2229m) and beyond. The two are part of the extensive Superski Dolomiti region. In summer, a chairlift and cable car from San Martino whisks walkers to the Rifugio Rosetta (2600m), from where several trails (some easy, some requiring mountaineering skills) can be picked up.

Cavalese's **tourist office** (☎ 0462 24 11 11; www.aptfiemme.tn.it; Via Bronzetti 60; ☹ 9am-noon & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat) and **San Martino tourist office** (☎ 0439 76 88 67; www.sanmartino.com; Via Passo Rolle 165; ☹ 9am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 9.30am-12.30pm Sun) both act as contact points for local Alpine guide groups, which organise, among other things, mountaineering ascents on Pale di San Martino, Cima della Madonna and Sass Maor, a 120km-long high-altitude skiing excursion.

Off the mountain, modern art is strikingly displayed at the **Centro Arte Contemporanea Cavalese** (☎ 0462 23 54 16; www.artecavalese.it; Palazzo Firmian, Piazzetta Rizzoli 1; admission free; ☹ 3.30-7.30pm Fri-Sun).

There are plenty of places to eat and sleep in the area. Calvase in particular has a couple of jewels.

our pick Hotel Garni Laurino (☎ 0462 34 01 51; www.hotelgarnilaurino.it; Via Antoniazzi 14; d €60-96; ☹) has been exquisitely decorated with floral fabrics and timber furniture. Some rooms have balconies overlooking the valley. The 17th-century hotel is a short walk from the village centre.

our pick El Molin (☎ 0462 34 00 74; Piazza Battisti 11; upstairs mains €8-15, downstairs mains €18-30; ☹ seasonal, hours vary) in the village is literally housed in an old mill; at street level you can sit at small tables on high stools and dine on delicious fish, meat and pasta dishes, or just unwind over a glass of wine. Downstairs, next to the old water wheels, it's a wonderland of stone nooks and crannies, candlelight and chef Alessandro Gilmozzi's incomparable cooking.

Getting There & Around

Trentino Transporti (www.ttspa.it in Italian) buses run from Trento to San Martino, from where local buses service the valleys.

Free ski buses shuttle around the valleys in winter. In summer, the Parco Naturale Paneveggio-Pale di San Martino runs buses around the park.

VAL DI FASSA

Framing the Val di Fassa are the stirring peaks of the Gruppo del Sella to the north, the Catinaccio (Rosengarten; 2981m) to the west and the Marmolada (3342m) to the southeast. The buzzing ski town of **Canazei** (population 1810; elevation 1465m) and the villages along the valley 17km south to the equally pretty town of **Moena** (population 2660; elevation 1114m), home to cross-country ski champ Christian Zorzi, are certainly geared towards summer and winter tourism. But some locals still make a traditional living from dairy farming. The valley remains a stronghold of Ladin culture (see the boxed text, p327).

Information

Canazei tourist office (☎ 0462 60 11 13; www.fassa.com; Piazza Marconi 5; ☹ 8.30am-12.15pm & 3.30-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun)

Val di Fassa tourist office (☎ 0462 60 95 00; www.fassa.com; Strada de Dolèda 10, Canazei; ☹ 8.30am-12.30pm & 1.30-5pm Mon-Sat, 10am-12.30pm Sun) Information on the whole valley.

Activities

Skiers are spoilt for choice, with 120km of downhill and cross-country runs, as well as challenging Alpine tours and the Sella Ronda ski circuit (p320). Dolomiti Superski passes are valid, alongside cheaper passes specific to the Val di Fassa, which cost €80/141 for three/six days. The Tre Valli ski pass (from €88/155 for a three-/six-day pass) covers the Fassa, Biois and San Pellegrino valleys. In summer, you can ski down the Marmolada glacier.

Walkers and skiers can approach the Gruppo del Sella from **Passo Pordoi**, where a cable car travels to almost 3000m. The best approach to the Catinaccio group is from Vigo di Fassa, 11km southwest of Canazei near Pozza di Fassa. Here, a cable car climbs to an elevation of 2000m, dropping you off near the mountain hut **Baita Checco** (☎ 0462 76 35 81; Vigo di Fassa; mains €7-12; ☞ 8am-4.30pm daily Dec-Mar & Jul-mid-Sep), where staff in red-and-white gingham serve Alpine specialities such as Gorgonzola-drizzled *canederli* (bread dumplings) in the split-level stone interior or on a wind-protected sun terrace.

For gentler rambles, ask at the tourist office for a copy of the English-language brochure *Low-level Walks in the Fassa Valley*, which outlines 29 walks (1.5km to 8km long) in the Val di Fassa. Of particular interest are those incorporating visits to old Ladin landmarks such as the **Botega da Pinter** (☎ 0462 57 35 74; Via Dolomiti 4, Canazei; ☞ 10am-noon & 4-7pm Mon-Sat mid-Jun-mid-Sep), an authentic reconstruction of a cooper's workshop and 16th-century sawmill **La Sìa** (☎ 0462 60 23 23; Via Pian Trevisan, Penia; ☞ 9am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri mid-Mar-mid-Dec), 3km east of Canazei along the narrow S641.

Detomas Fiorenzo (☎ 0462 60 24 47; Via Pareda 31, Canazei) is one of several sports shops renting mountain bikes, as well as snowboards. Ski rental outlets in the area are plentiful.

In Canazei's village centre, take time to pop into the workshop of traditional sculptor and toy maker **Andrea Soraperra** (☎ 0462 60 24 27; Via Dolomites 109), where you can watch him make the enchanting toys and evocative sculptures displayed in his attached shop. Among his creations are typical wooden character masks worn in the **Carnevale Fassano** that takes place in the valley in February or March each year.

Sleeping, Eating & Drinking

As elsewhere in the mountains, hotels and restaurants are generally open from mid-

December to Easter and from June to mid-September, including those listed here, unless otherwise noted.

CANAZEI

Garni Stella Alpina (☎ 0462 60 11 27; www.stella-alpina.net; Via Antermont 4; d €64-104; (P) ☞) Tucked away in a small street lined with impossibly quaint buildings yet still in the village heart, this immaculate Ladin B&B has just seven pastel rooms and a soothing sauna and Jacuzzi.

Hotel Cesa Tyrol (☎ 0462 60 11 56; www.hotelcesa-tyrol.com; Viale Cascata 2; d half board €94-202; (P) ☞) In winter, try for a room on the western side of this chalet-style building, with its Christmas-card views of Canazei's church spire rising above the snow-covered village. Public areas are modern and elegant, and many rooms have timber balconies.

Hotel Rita (☎ 0462 60 12 19; www.hotelrita.com; Streda de Pareda 16; d half board from €98; (P) ☞ ☞) Looking like it's made out of gingerbread, this sugary blue-and-white hotel sits 20m from the main square at the base of the ski lift. Pine furniture fills all 21 rooms, which are wi-fi equipped. As well as a cocktail piano bar, there's an in-house masseuse. In winter there's a minimum stay; the length varies depending on the season.

Café Antermont (☎ 0462 60 10 40; Piazza Marconi 15; cakes around €3.10; ☞ 7am-midnight year-round) If you need an energy boost, stop by this café on the main square for home-baked sponge cake with Alpine cream and a shot of espresso. Look up to see the wood-carved traditional Tyrolean witch on a broomstick that decorates the ceiling.

ourpick El Paél (☎ 0462 60 14 33; Streda Roma 54; set menus €27, mains €14-19.90; ☞ Tue-Sun) This welcoming Osteria Tipica Trentina (see the boxed text, p320) has a traditional Ladin kitchen cooking up specialities of the valley such as nettle dumplings with spinach and Vezzena cheese, asparagus with liquorice sauce, and venison with steamed pumpkin.

Husky Pub (☎ 0462 60 11 11; www.huskypub.com; ☞ 8.30am-1.30am Tue-Sun Dec-Easter; ☞) Set in the basement of the Hotel Croce Bianca and run by a young, hip team, Husky's booths overflow with après-skiers sipping Husky Roska cocktails made from forest-fruit liqueur with vodka and crushed ice. Live music performances (mostly contemporary covers) every night.

MOUNTAIN MEALS

While in Trentino, look out for restaurants bearing an **Osteria Tipica Trentina** label, which certifies that it's faithful to the local cooking traditions and that the produce – including meats, cheeses and wines – comes straight from the province.

In both provinces, delicious mountain specialities include:

Canederli Large bread dumplings, known in German as *knödel*.

Cotto e cren Cooked ham with horseradish; *salsa al cren* is a sausage variation, and both are antipasti.

Formaggio grigio A complex cheese from the Val Pusteria, concocted from unpasteurised milk. Season it with apple vinegar, olive oil and salt.

Gulasch A thinner version of spicy Hungarian goulash, either served as a soup or with *canederli* as a main course.

Polenta e coniglio Game dishes are popular in Trentino-Alto Adige; this one includes rabbit, cooked with polenta.

Polenta e crauti Cornflour meal and sauerkraut, two staple ingredients in the kitchens of Trentino-Alto Adige.

Risotto ai funghi Risotto laced with *brisa* mushrooms, locally picked and known for their extraordinarily strong and distinctive flavour.

Schüttelerot Jaw-breakingly hard brown bread, with a subtle salt flavour.

Spätzle Miniature flour-and-egg dumplings, topped with melted Gorgonzola. Can be a tasty antipasto or dished up alongside meat as a main course.

Speck Strong smoked ham served on just about every menu.

Strangolapreti Spinach-flavoured gnocchi.

Strudel A famous dessert of sliced and cooked apples rolled in a thick pastry.

Trippe alla parmigiana Tripe with Parmesan cheese.

MOENA

Camping Catinaccio Rosengarten (☎ 0462 76 33 05; www.catinacciorosengarten.com; Via Avisio 15, Pozza di Fassi; per person €6.50-9, tent & car €6-7.30, 2-bed bungalow without bathroom €36.50, 2-person bungalow with bathroom €42; ☒ closed May–mid-Jun & Oct; (P)) This huge site in Pozza di Fassi, near Moena, has a selection of wood and brick bungalows if canvas isn't your thing (though you'll need to bring your own linen and towels). Activities include archery, football and guided mountain excursions.

Hotel Romantica (☎ 0462 57 32 98; www.hotellaromantica.it; Strada di Molign 31; s half board €60-114, d half board €100-190; ☒ closed Oct-Nov & May; (P) ☒ ☒) The pride and joy of its friendly owners, all of the airy contemporary rooms at this garden-set hotel have timber floors and furniture as well as wi-fi, balconies and massage shower jets. Downstairs, you can relax in two sun-filled restaurants, a Turkish bath, tropical shower and solarium, or prime yourself for tackling the mountains in the gym.

Kusk La Locanda (☎ 0462 57 46 27; Via dei Colli 7; dishes from €7; ☒ 8am-2am Wed-Mon, closed May) Legendry throughout the Val di Fassa for its après-ski scene, this tri-level trendsetter has a dance floor and regular live music, including Latin and jazz. It's also a good bet for a relaxed meal, with an excellent Ladin kitchen and a traditional wood-fire pizza oven.

Getting There & Away

The Val di Fassa can be reached by bus from Trento year-round, and by SAD bus from Bolzano and the Val Gardena from June to mid-September, with free ski buses also serving the region in winter.

The mountain passes feel like you're driving over the top of the world, and are simultaneously stunning and terrifying, with blind hairpin bends, falling rocks, and sheer drops. Be sure to check road conditions, requirements and closures before you set out by car.

GRUPPO DEL SELLA

The Sella group of Dolomite mountains straddles the border between Trentino and Alto Adige, close to Cortina d'Ampezzo in the Veneto and the spectacular Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies. To the west is the spiky Sassolungo (Langkofel; 3181m), which extends to the Alpe di Siusi in Alto Adige. To the east is the Val Badia and its main town, Corvara, while to the south lies the Val di Fassa.

Skiers can complete the tour of the Sella in a single day on a circular network of runs known as the **Sella Ronda** (meaning 'saddle' in Italian). The long and challenging 40km route (26km covered by runs and 13.5km by ski lifts) is suitable for skiers with a medium level of experience and fitness and lots

of luck with the weather. Tourist offices can give you a leaflet that describes the clockwise and anticlockwise routes, kicking off from Selva (1565m) in the Val Gardena no later than 10am. Portavescovo, at 2495m, is the highest point. You'll need a Dolomiti Superski pass (p305). In summer, a hop-on hop-off bus circles the Sella Ronda, picking up and dropping off walkers – see p328.

Both the Sella and Sassolungo walking trails can be reached from Canazei or the Val Gardena resorts by bus to Passo di Sella or Passo di Pordoi. Passo di Sella (2244m) is a mountain pass laced with hairpin bends. From the equally hair-raising Passo di Pordoi (2239m), a cable car takes you to Sasso Pordoi (2950m). Take in the breathtaking views from the café terrace of the **Rifugio Maria** (☎ 0462 60 11 78), then pick up the Alta Via No 2 trail, which crosses the group, heads down to the Passo Gardena and continues into the Parco Naturale Puez-Odle.

ALTO ADIGE

BOLZANO

pop 97,300 / elev 265m

Two-thirds of the population in Alto Adige (Südtirol) speak German as their first language, but that figure is actually reversed in Bolzano (Bozen in German), largely because of its role as the province's capital. In Bolzano especially, the linguistic lines are blurring further, due to new generations who have a German-speaking mother and an Italian-speaking father or vice versa.

Bolzano's compact historic centre, with its pastel Hansel-and-Gretel-like architecture and arcaded streets, is typically Tyrolean, and a really lovely place for a stroll. Vineyards extend right into the city. Incredibly, the basin effect of the surrounding mountains means this Alpine city can actually record the hottest temperatures anywhere in Italy during summer, often nudging 39°C, at which time there's no better refreshment than a cold, locally brewed beer.

Settled in the Middle Ages, Bolzano was an important market town that became a pawn in the power battles between the bishops of Trento and the counts of Tyrol – see the boxed text, p308. Today, it's a thriving little city, with numerous outdoor cafés, restaurants and pubs, as well as some fine museums, including the inspired Messner Mountain Museum.

Bolzano is linked by a cable car to San Genesio (1087m), 10km northwest by a wiggly road; Renon, several kilometres east; and Colle (1181m), 4km south. The Colle cableway is the world's oldest – you can view a reconstruction of the original gondola at the upper terminal.

Information

Hospital (☎ 0471 90 81 11; Via Lorenz Böhrler) Out of the centre towards Merano.

Police station (☎ 0471 94 76 11, 0471 94 76 80; Via Marconi 33)

Post office (Piazza Parrocchia 1; ☎ 8am-6.30pm Mon-Fri, 8am-12.30pm Sat)

Tourist office (☎ 0471 30 70 00; www.bolzano-bozen.it; Piazza Walther 8; ☎ 9am-1pm & 2-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-2pm Sat)

Sights & Activities

Just off Bolzano's main square, Piazza Walther, is the city's Gothic **cathedral** (Piazza Parrocchia; ☎ 9.30am-5.30pm Mon-Sat). Nearby, the cloisters and chapel of **Chiesa dei Domenicani** (Piazza Domenicani; ☎ 9.30am-6pm Mon-Sat) feature 14th-century frescoes by the Giotto school. Take a walk along arcaded **Via Portici**, through the charming Piazza delle Erbe, the daily fresh-produce market, to reach the 14th-century **Chiesa di Francescani** (Via dei Francescani). It features beautiful cloisters and a magnificent Gothic altarpiece, carved in 1500 by Hans Klocker, in the Cappella della Beata Vergine (Chapel of the Blessed Virgin).

The star of the **Museo Archeologico dell'Alto Adige** (☎ 0471 32 01 00; www.iceman.it; Via Museo 43; adult/child under 6yr €8/free; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun) is Ötzi, the Iceman. The amazingly intact mummified body, decorated with mysterious tattoos, was discovered by tourists in the Similaun glacier in September 1991 and dates back more than 5000 years. The so-called Iceman's clothing and equipment is on display, while his still-frozen body is kept in a separate, temperature-controlled room and can be viewed through a tiny window. Ötzi aside, the museum also has an important collection of archaeological finds.

Alto Adige's wondrous flora, fauna and geology can be discovered at the **Museo di Scienze Naturali dell'Alto Adige** (☎ 0471 41 29 64; www.museonatura.it; Via dei Bottai 1; adult/child €5/3.50; ☎ 10am-6pm Tue-Sun). The centrepiece is its gigantic saltwater aquarium.

A 20km-long bike path running mostly along the river connects Bolzano's castles:

MUSEUM CARD

Serious sightseers can pick up a **Museum-Card** (€2.50), valid for an entire year. Discounted access includes five museums in Bolzano, plus city tours. The card is available at the tourist office and from participating museums.

the 12th-century **Castel Mareccio** (Schloss Marsch; ☎ 0471 97 66 15; mareccio@comune.bolzano.it; Via Claudia de' Medici 12; 🕒 9.30am-12.30pm & 2-5.30pm Mon-Fri); the 1237-built **Castel Roncolo** (☎ 0471 32 98 08; roncolo@comune.bolzano.it; Via Castel Ried; adult/child €8/5.50; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun), also known as Schloss Runkelstein, which is renowned for its rare 14th-century frescoes depicting scenes from secular literature such as the tale of Tristan and Isolde; and the highlight, **Castel Firmiano**, dating back to AD 945. This rambling castle and its grounds are home to the **Messner Mountain Museum** (MMM; ☎ 0471 63 31 45; www.messner-mountain-museum.it in Italian; adult/student €8/6; 🕒 10am-6pm Tue-Sun Mar-Nov) created by mountaineer Reinhold Messner as the centrepiece

of his five mountain museums. Based around man's relationship with the mountains across all cultures, this insightful museum is configured so that you climb literally hundreds of stairs, giving you the experience of shifting altitudes. Poignant exhibits include photographs of those who have lost their life on the mountains, and Laurin's Cave, which evokes age-old Tyrolean legends. You'll need to wear sturdy shoes for the uneven terrain and mesh walkways; wheelchair access is not possible. The tourist office has details of shuttle services to the castles.

Bolzano's three cable cars whisk skiers and walkers into the mountains:

Funivia del Colle (☎ 0471 97 85 45; Via Campiglio; one way/return €3/4)

Funivia del Renon (☎ 0471 97 84 79; Via Renon; one way/return €2.50/3.50) 500m east of the train station.

Funivia San Genesio (☎ 0471 97 84 36; Via Sarentino; one way/return €3/3.20)

Tours

The tourist office organises guided expeditions of a gentle nature around Bolzano from April to early November. A half-/full-day walk



costs €8/20 and places must be reserved in advance. For more serious hikes in Alto Adige, contact local walking association **Club Alpino Italiano** (☎ 0471 97 81 72; Piazza delle Erbe 46; ☎ 11am-1pm & 5-7pm Tue-Fri) or call the **Alpine Information Office** (Alpenverein Südtirol; ☎ 0471 99 99 55).

Sleeping

ostello della Gioventù Bolzano (☎ 0471 30 08 65; www.jugendherberge.it; Via Renon 23; dm incl breakfast €19.50-21.50, s incl breakfast €22-24; 📺) Close to the train station, the three- and four-bed dorms in this new independent hostel are configured so that bunks are set at different angles and they're partly screened by timber lockers for added privacy. Best of all, there's no daytime lockout.

ourpick Hotel Figl (☎ 0471 97 84 12; www.figl.net; Piazza del Grano 9; s €80-100, d €100-110; 📺 📺 📺) This is a well-priced and really stylish hotel, with chic, contemporary rooms with glass-partitioned bathrooms, chocolate, caramel and white tones, geometric furniture, and a streamlined ground-floor bar. It's tucked away on a pretty piazza, just footsteps from Piazza Walther. An 'Italian breakfast' (espresso and brioche) costs €3; a hot and cold buffet costs €11. Pick up a permit from reception for free street parking, or arrange discounted garaged parking nearby.

Hotel Greif (☎ 0471 31 80 00; www.greif.it; Piazza Walther; s €132-196, d €170-245; 📺 📺 📺 📺) Hotel Greif's 33 light and spacious rooms have each been decorated by a different contemporary artist, and come with a laptop and free internet access. Guests can use the swimming pool at nearby Parkhotel Laurin.

Parkhotel Laurin (☎ 0471 31 10 00; www.laurin.it; Via Laurin 4; s €112-172, d €170-240; 📺 📺 📺 📺) Set in its own lush gardens in the centre of town, the Laurin has been Bolzano's choicest hotel since 1910. Spacious rooms are individually styled, with large marble bathrooms and original artworks. Jazz swings in the piano bar on Friday evening, and the Laurin's restaurant is also one of Bolzano's best – mains cost €23 to €24.

Eating & Drinking

Local specialties include *speckknödelsuppe* (bacon-dumpling soup), complemented with a red St Magdalener or Lagrein wine.

For nightlife, follow the locals heading for Piazza delle Erbe.

ourpick Fischbänke Pic-Nic Bar (☎ 0471 97 17 14; Via Dott Streiter 26a; dishes €5-10; 9am-7pm Mon-Fri, 9am-

12.30pm Sat) A sign next to the speakers that reads 'This is not McDonalds' says it all. Run by artist/host/*bon vivant* Cobo on the site of the old fish market, the Fischbänke has the market's original white marble tables that you can pull up a stool at for a glass of Tyrolean wine, and quite possibly northern Italy's most beautiful bruschetta, while Cobo shows you his artwork, which includes a series of charismatic cartoon birds. Hours can vary if Cobo feels like shutting up early or (more likely) staying open late.

Hofpen & Co (☎ 0471 30 07 88; Piazza delle Erbe 17; mains €5-9; ☎ 9.30am-1am Mon-Sat) Step back into the Habsburg era at this venerable 800-year-old inn that serves up hearty portions of traditional dishes including sauerkraut and sausages cooked in beer. The bar is a dark wood-panelled affair, fine for sampling the cloudy, unfiltered beer that's brewed on the premises in a couple of gleaming copper vats.

Vögele (☎ 0471 97 39 38; Via Goethe 3; mains €9-19; ☎ 9am-1am) Dating back to 1277 and owned by the same family since 1840, this antique-filled pub and restaurant serves hearty Tyrolean fare such as schnitzels in candlelight surroundings; otherwise you can just come by for a drink.

Restaurant Walthers' (☎ 0471 32 40 22; Piazza Walther 6; mains €9.80-21.50; ☎ 8am-1am Mon-Sat, 8am-7pm Sun; 📺) Take a seat on the terrace spilling onto Bolzano's main square, or head into the cool, dark interior to dine on Asian- and Mediterranean-influenced dishes such as wok-fried tagliatelle with prawns, grilled tuna with vegetables, sesame seeds and wasabi, or spit-roasted veal. Don't miss Walthers' espresso mousse, served in a classic espresso cup and topped with fresh cream and coffee beans.

Pick up fruit, vegetables, bread, cheese and meats from the morning **market** (Piazza delle Erbe; ☎ Mon-Sat).

Getting There & Around

Bolzano airport (Aeroporto di Bolzano; ☎ 0471 25 52 55; www.abd-airport.it) is served by flights to Rome, Olbia and Cagliari. Cheap airport transfers are available through **Locus Coach** (www.locuscoach.com).

Buses run by **SAD** (www.sad.it) leave from the **bus station** (☎ 840 00 04 71; Via Perathoner) for destinations throughout the province, including Val Gardena (up to 12 daily), Brunico (up to 20 connections daily) and Merano (55 minutes, hourly). SAD buses also head for

resorts outside the province, including Cortina d'Ampezzo. Updated timetables are on the SAD website.

Bolzano **train station** (Piazza Stazione) is connected by hourly trains with Merano (40 minutes), Trento (30 minutes), Verona (2½ hours), with less frequent connections to Brunico (1½ hours, six daily) in the Val Pusteria.

Bicycles can be picked up at the open-air **bike rental stall** (☎ 0471 99 75 78; Via della Stazione 2; ☎ 7.30am-8pm Easter-Oct) near the train station. Bikes cost €6 for one hour, or an extra €2 for more than six hours, but must be returned overnight; you may need to leave a deposit. The tourist office also rents bikes for €5 per day (plus deposit).

MERANO

pop 34,300 / elev 323m

Palm trees are the last thing you'd expect to find in this Alpine region, but like Bolzano, Merano (Meran in German) lies in a deep basin, giving it a Mediterranean microclimate. Merano has long been known for its spa treatments. The newly renovated Terme di Merano, an ultramodern thermal-bath complex, dominates one side of the river dividing the picturesque Tyrolean town centre. The river is shadowed by a park-lined promenade that is a favourite with locals for a stroll.

Nearby to Merano are the Parco Naturale Gruppo del Tessa; the spectacular Ortles mountain range; and a vast, uninhabited chunk of what's dubbed Italy's loneliest park, the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio.

Orientation & Information

The train and bus stations are a 10-minute stroll from the centre. Exit the train station, turn right into Via Europa and at Piazza Mazzini take Corso Libertà – past the tourist office and several banks with ATMs – to reach the historic centre. Pedestrianised Via dei Portici is the main shopping street.

MERAN CARD

If you're going to be in Merano for a while, the **Meran Card** (www.meranerland.com) makes life easy. Valid for three (adult/child €25/12.50) or seven days (€46/23), it gives free access to museums, buses and lifts. It's available from the tourist office.

Ospedale Civile Tappeiner (☎ 0473 26 33 33; Via Rossini 5) For medical emergencies.

Post office (Via Roma 2) On the other side of the Passirio river from the old town.

Tourist office (☎ 0473 23 52 23; www.meraninfo.it; Corso Libertà 35; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 9.30am-12.30pm Sat)

Sights

The historic centre of town surrounds arcaded Via dei Portici and Piazza del Duomo – take any of the streets off Corso Libertà near the tourist office (leading away from the river).

Exhibits chronicle 200 years of female fashions at the **Museo della Donna** (☎ 0473 23 12 16; Via dei Portici 68; adult/child €3.60/2.60; ☎ 10am-noon & 2-5pm Mon-Fri, 10am-12.30pm Sat Jan-Oct, 10am-6pm Sat-Mon Nov & Dec), with plenty of period costumes and accessories. The small but intriguing **Museo Ebraico** (☎ 0473 23 61 27; Via Schiller 14; admission free; ☎ 3-6pm Tue & Wed, 9am-noon Thu, 3-5pm Fri) is housed in Merano's synagogue, built in 1901, and recounts the history of the town's Jewish population from the early 19th century through to WWII.

Just outside the town of Tirolo, **Castel Tirolo** (Schlosstiroil; ☎ 0473 22 02 21; www.schlosstiroil.it; adult/child €6/3; ☎ 10am-5pm Tue-Sun mid-Mar-Oct, till 6pm Aug) is the new home of the Castel Tirolo Museum, which spans the history of the entire Tyrol. In the keep you'll find exhibits interpreting the turbulent history of South Tyrol during the 20th century. Many of the displays are rotated on a regular basis. The castle can be reached by taking the chairlift from Merano to Tirolo (opposite); trains and buses also serve the village.

Exotic plants, an aviary and a rainbow of 100,000-odd tulips (in season) surround **Castel Trauttmansdorff** (www.trauttmansdorff.it; Via San Valentino 51a), a mid-19th-century castle where Empress Sissi stayed while taking the waters at Merano. Inside the castle, the **Touriseum** (Tourism Museum; ☎ 0473 27 01 72; www.touriseum.it; garden & museum adult/child €9.80/7.50; ☎ 9am-6pm mid-Mar-Apr & Oct-mid-Nov, 9am-9pm May-Sep) charts the last two centuries of Alpine tourism and the changes it has heralded for mountain life. A garden-set restaurant and a café by the waterlily pond both offer a chance to soak up the lush surrounds.

Beer-lovers should book in for a tour of the **Forst Brewery** (☎ 0473 26 01 11; Forst), just outside Merano. The tourist office has details; tours are by advance reservation only.

Activities

For centuries the **Terme Merano** (Therme Meran; ☎ 0473 25 20 00; www.kurbadmeran.it; Piazza Terme 1; swimming pools per 2hr adult/child €9.50/5.50, all day €16/10; ☎ 9am-10pm) has been Merano's main draw. The spa was recently renovated and now revolves around a futuristic glass cube. There's a staggering 13 indoor and 12 outdoor pools (including a sea-water pool with underwater music), though only a couple of them use the town's actual thermal waters. The range of treatments on offer is equally lengthy, with everything from a South Tyrolean sheep's wool bath (€29, 20 minutes) to multiday detox packages. The spa complex is also home to a restaurant and a four-star hotel. Though it has a staff of 100, treatment bookings need to be made at least one month in advance.

Some 6km east of town, the **Funivia Val di Nova** (adult half-/full-day ski pass €16/25; ☎ 9am-noon & 1.15-5pm) cable car, operated by **Funivie Monte Ivigna** (☎ 0473 23 48 21; www.merano2000.com in Italian; Via Val di Nova 37), carries winter-sports enthusiasts up to Piffling in **Merano 2000**, a small ski station at 2000m, with 30km of slopes served by five chairlifts, a gondola and a couple of drag lifts. Skiing on the mountain is limited and is best suited to beginners. Bus 1B links Merano train station with the Val di Nova cable car.

The tourist office runs guided walks between July and September, and distributes a free map, marked up with various parks and walks, including the popular *Passeggiata Tappeiner*, which kicks off on Via Laurin and meanders for 4km around Monte Benedetto (514m) before dropping down to the banks of the Passirio. The **chairlift** (☎ 0473 92 31 05; Via Laurin; ☎ 9am-6pm Sep-Jun, 9am-7pm Jul & Aug), next to the start of the footpath, links Merano with the village of **Tirol**, from where a **cable car** (☎ 0473 92 34 80) carries on up the mountain to **Muta**. Another itinerary, the *Passeggiata Gilf*, makes for a pleasant riverside stroll – a different poem is carved on each of the 24 wooden benches lining the footpath.

Sleeping & Eating

Ostello della Gioventù Merano (☎ 0473 20 71 54; www.jugendherberge.it; Via Carducci 77; dm €19.50, s €22; ☎) An easy stroll from the train station and less than a block from the riverside promenade, this spotless independent hostel has a pool table, table tennis and foosball, a laundry, as

well as 59 beds in ensuite dorms sleeping a maximum of four.

Pension Ausserweindhof (☎ 0473 23 42 03; www.ausserweindhof.com; Via Cava 2; d €56-72, 2-person apt €52-58; ☎) Nestled among vineyards and orchards in quiet countryside about 3km east of town, this friendly little *pensione* (hotel) has clean, plain rooms, and the unexpected bonus of a sparkling outdoor pool and sauna. There's a 10% surcharge for stays of less than three nights.

Hotel Graf von Meran (☎ 0473 23 21 81; www.contedimerano.com; Via delle Corse 78; s €48-60, d €76-100; ☎) Near Merano's elegant shopping strip Via dei Portici, rooms at this choice hotel are done out in elegant yet sparing décor. Half/full board at the timber-panelled restaurant costs an extra €11/18 per person.

Vigilius Mountain Resort (☎ 0473 55 66 00; www.vigilius.it; Lana; s €225-235, d €310-345; ☎ ☎) Sick of driving? Dump the car in Vigilius' private garage in the valley and take a seven-minute cable-car ride – the only way to reach this eco-spa resort above Merano. Built from natural materials (clay walls, slatted timber), this mountain haven has spa treatments that will de-stress the weariest traveller, including pine-cone reflexology, polenta peels, a glassed-in Jacuzzi overlooking the peaks, and two restaurants (one traditional, one gourmet). Prices include cable-car tickets and activities such as yoga and Nordic walking.

Café König (☎ 0473 23 71 62; Corso della Libertà 168) Merano's best *pasticceria* (pastry shop) is an old-fashioned local gathering spot, with a tempting takeaway counter up front, and comfy tables down the back. Great for an espresso and slice of strudel or something more filling. Snacks cost from €3.50.

Vinoteca Pizzeria Relax (☎ 0473 23 67 35; Via Cavour 31; pizzas around €7-9; ☎ noon-2.30pm & 6pm-12.30am) This bottle-lined bar/restaurant is a great place to try a glass or two of Alto Adige's fine wines, as well as steaming hot pizzas.

Forsterbräu (☎ 0473 23 65 35; Corso della Libertà 90; mains around €10; ☎ Wed-Mon) Set around an atmospheric courtyard, this typically Tyrolean restaurant cooks up a lovely *gulaschsuppe* (goulash soup) and a choice of fresh trout dishes. The place is actually part of the Forst brewery concern, making a pint of Forst beer a must.

Getting There & Around

SAD buses connect Merano **bus station** (Piazza Stazione) with Monte San Caterina and other villages that give access to the Gruppo del

Tessa, as well as to Silandro and the valleys leading into the Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio and the Ortles range.

The train ride to Bolzano (€2.20, almost hourly) is an easy 40-minute journey from Merano **train station** (Piazza Stazione).

Pick up a free pair of wheels (you'll require a small deposit) from the open-air bicycle stand marked **Noleggio Biciclette-Fahrradverleih** (☎ 9am-7pm Mon-Sat Mar-Sep), located next to the bus station.

PARCO NAZIONALE DELLO STELVIO

The Alto Adige side of this national park, which also sprawls into Trentino, offers fantastic walking possibilities. There is a network of well-marked trails, including routes over some of the range's glaciers.

The glaciers permit year-round skiing and there are well-serviced runs at Solda and the Passo della Stelvio (2757m); the latter is the second-highest pass in the Alps and is approached from the north from the hamlet of Trafoi (1543m) on one of Europe's most spectacular roads, a series of tight switch-backs covering 15km, with some *very* steep gradients. The road is famous among cyclists, who flock to the park every summer to tackle the ascent.

With the highest slopes at 3012m, good snow is assured season-long. The Parco Nazionale dello Stelvio can be approached from Merano (from where you have easy access to the Val d'Ultimo, Val Martello, Val di Solda and the Passo Stelvio), or from the Val di Sole in Trentino.

Bormio

elev 1125m

Heading immediately south of the Passo della Stelvio brings you to this pretty little ski resort. In its well-preserved medieval centre, the **Bormio tourist office** (☎ 0342 90 33 00; www.bormioonline.com; Via Roma 131b, Bormio; ☎ seasonal, hours vary) is an unbeatable source of information on the entire park.

The town has been famous for its curative springs since Roman times, and today the **Bormio Terme** (☎ 0342 90 13 25; www.bormioterme.it; Via Stelvio 10; admission 1hr €8-11; ☎ 9am-10pm Mon & Wed, 9am-midnight Fri, 9am-8pm Thu, Sat & Sun, closed May) offers scads of spa treatments (inhalations, mud therapies and so on). The prices given include access to the indoor and outdoor pools; package rates are also available.

Otherwise, do as Leonardo da Vinci did in 1493 and try the **Hotel Bagni Vecchi** (☎ 0342 91 01 31; www.bagnidibormio.it; Via Statale Stelvio; d €208-268; ☎ ☎ ☎), a luxurious spa complex on the site of an old Roman bathing site, with no less than 30 hot springs, 11 outdoor pools, and a host of treatments. It doesn't come cheap, but prices include unlimited spa access.

Val di Solda

The village of **Solda** (1906m), at the head of the Val di Solda, is a small ski resort and a base for walkers and climbers in summer. Challenging trails lead you to high altitudes, including trail No 28, which crosses the Passo di Madriccio (3123m) into the Val Martello. Solda's **tourist office** (☎ 0473 61 30 15, Solda; ☎ seasonal, hours vary) has information on accommodation and activities. Between October and Christmas the village all but shuts down.

SAD buses connect Solda with Merano Monday to Friday during the summer only; you need to change at Spondigna.

Val Martello

If you're after a gentle ramble rather than a hard-core hiking adventure, this picturesque valley offers relatively low-altitude walks, with spectacular views of some of the park's soaring peaks. Trail No 20 up into the Val di Peder is an easy walk, with some lovely picnic spots along the way and the chance to see animals, including chamois and deer.

Unspoiled by ski lifts and downhill ski runs, in the winter there is excellent cross-country skiing. Climbers can attempt the valley's frozen waterfalls from January to March.

The road into the valley is open year-round, and SAD bus 107 runs to **Martello** village from Silandro.

VAL GARDENA

For skiers who seriously love their sport, this awe-inspiring valley is it. Hemmed in by the Parco Naturale Puez-Odle, the imposing Gruppo del Sella and Sassolungo, and the gentle slopes of the Alpe di Siusi (the largest high plain in the Alps), glitz and glamour take second place to great skiing, hence prices are relatively reasonable.

Also keeping visitor numbers down are the twisting mountain roads and passes that access the valley, which is a key reason why Ladin culture (see boxed text, opposite) has

remained strong here. The valley's main towns, **Ortisei** (population 5700; elevation 1236m), **Santa Cristina** (population 1840; elevation 1428m) and **Selva** (population 2580; elevation 1563m), all have good facilities.

Information

The valley is covered by www.valgardena.it.

Ortisei tourist office (☎ 0471 77 76 00; Via Rezia 1; 🕒 8.30am–12.30pm & 2.30–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 8.30am or 10am–noon & 5–6.30pm Sun)

Santa Cristina tourist office (☎ 0471 77 78 00; Via Chemun 9; 🕒 8am–noon & 2.30–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 8.30am or 9.30am–noon Sun)

Selva tourist office (☎ 0471 77 79 00; Via Mëisules 213; 🕒 8am–noon & 3–6.30pm Mon–Sat, 8.30am or 9am–noon & 4.30pm or 5–6.30pm Sun)

Tourist medical service Ortisei (☎ 0471 79 77 85); Selva (☎ 0471 79 42 66)

Activities

In addition to its own fine downhill ski runs, the valley forms part of the Sella Ronda (p320), for which you will need a Dolomiti Superski pass. Ski passes covering the Val Gardena and Alpe di Siusi are marginally cheaper – €33/99/165 for one/three/six days (high season €37/107/188).

Vallunga, near Selva, is one of the best spots for cross-country skiing. There are stunning trails around Forcella Pordoi and Val Lasties in the Gruppo del Sella, and on the Sassolungo.

This is also a walkers' paradise with endless possibilities, from the challenging Alte Vie of the Gruppo del Sella and the magnificent Parco Naturale Puez-Odle, to picturesque strolls for walkers of all abilities in spots such as the Vallunga. Those seeking guidance can

THE LADIN TRADITION

At one point the entire Tyrol was Ladin but today five remote valleys – Val Gardena and Val Badia in Alto Adige, Val di Fassa in Trentino, and the Arabba and Ampezzo areas near Cortina in the Veneto – safeguard ancient Ladin traditions.

Ladin language and culture can be traced back to around 15 BC, when the people of the Central Alps were forcibly united into the Roman province of Rhaetia. The original inhabitants modified the Romans' Latin language to such an extent that by the 5th century it had evolved into an independent Romance language, known as Rhaeto-Romanic.

Ironically, it's partly because of the split between Italian and German in the region (see p308) that Ladin has endured, with a total of 20,000 first-language speakers today, of which 9000 live in the Val Gardena. It is not only older folk who speak it: alongside German and Italian, 50% of the local schooling is in Ladin, and the survival of the Ladin cultural and linguistic identity is protected by law. According to one Val Gardena local in her 20s, to be Ladin is 'a way of feeling. I've grown up speaking the language; I don't feel Italian, or South Tyrolean, I feel Ladin.'

Ladin, which has completely different dialects across its five strongholds, remains a small but thriving language. Contemporary media includes the newspaper **La Usc di Ladins** (The Voice; www.lauscdiladins.com in Ladin & Italian), a five-minute daily TV news bulletin on national broadcaster **RAI** in Ladin (alternating between the different dialects each day), and the radio station **Radio Gherdëina** (94.2 FM), which is broadcast from the Val Gardena, and is great to tune into while you're here (and plays better music than your average Italian radio station, too).

The following are some excellent places to discover the culture's vibrant poetry and legends; peopled by fairies, elves, giants and heroes:

Museo Ladin (Ortisei) (☎ 0471 79 75 54; Piazza San Antonio, Ortisei, Val Gardena; admission free; 🕒 10am–noon & 3–7pm Tue–Sun Jul & Aug, 3–6.30pm Tue–Fri Jun, Sep & Oct, 3–6.30pm Tue & Fri Nov–Apr) Ask here or at the tourist office for information on woodcarving courses during July and August.

Museo Ladin di Fascia (☎ 0462 76 01 82; museo@istladin.net; Via Milano 5, Pozza di Fassa, Val di Fassa; admission free; 🕒 10am–noon & 3–7pm Jul & Aug, 3–7pm Tue–Sat Sep–Jun)

Institut Cultural Ladin (☎ 0462 76 42 67; www.istladin.net; Via della Chiesa 6, Vigo di Fassa, Val di Fassa) Extensive library and film archive; also runs Ladin-language courses.

Museo Ladin (San Martino) (☎ 0474 52 40 20; www.museumladin.it; Via Tor 72, San Martino, Val Badia; adult/child €5.50/2.75; 🕒 10am–6pm Tue–Sat, 2–6pm Sun mid–Mar–Oct, 2–6pm Wed–Fri end Dec–mid–Mar) Atmospherically set in a castle 15km south of Brunico.

contact the nearest office of the **Scuola di Alpinismo Catores** (www.catores.com) in **Ortisei** (☎ 0471 79 82 23; Piazza Stettenect 1; ☞ 5.30-7pm) or the cultural centre in **Selva** (☎ 0471 78 41 33; ☞ 5.30-7pm). Both Alpine guide schools can organise botanical walks, as well as climbing courses, glacier excursions and treks.

In summer cable cars carry walkers into the mountains from all three towns in the valley. From Ortisei you can ride a cable car to Seceda which, at 2518m, offers an unforgettable view of the Gruppo di Odle, a cathedral-like series of mountain spires. From Seceda, trail No 2A passes through a typical Alpine environment – impossibly green, sloping pastures dotted with wooden *malghe* (Alpine hut) used by herders as summer shelters.

Sleeping & Eating

Tourist offices have full lists of sleeping and eating options in the valley; Ortisei in particular has plenty for anyone seeking a bit of luxury.

Hotel Maria (☎ 0471 79 70 47; www.hotelmaria.cc; Via Rezia 49, Ortisei; d half board from €70; (P)) In Ortisei's pedestrian heart, Maria is a spotless option in a renovated townhouse with soothing neutral-toned rooms, rich carpets and free use of nearby swimming pools and tennis courts.

Hotel Posta Al Cervo (☎ 0471 79 51 74; www.hotelpostaalcervo.com; Via Meisules 116, Selva; d half board €80-100; (P) ☞) Right in Selva's village centre, the Posta al Cervo is a friendly and reasonably priced little place with cosy, woody rooms and a fine restaurant serving Ladin and Italian cuisine. Full board costs an extra €11 per person.

Charme Hotel Uridl (☎ 0471 79 32 15; www.uridl.it; Via Chemun 43, Santa Christina; d half board €98-190; (P) ☞) This Santa Christina hotel looks an absolute picture on chilly nights when it's covered with snow and its lights are glowing inside. A free ski bus from the hotel drops you at the slopes, and in summer there's a sun-drenched garden to loll about in. Dinner at the sweet little restaurant is served by candlelight.

Ristorante Concordia (☎ 0471 79 62 76; Via Roma 41, Ortisei; mains €10-14) You're sure of getting the real deal here: all the pasta served in Concordia's wood-panelled dining room is made by hand, as are the breads, including olive, vegetable and nut varieties; the ham, too, is smoked on the premises and the wines come from the surrounding vineyards.

Getting There & Around

The Val Gardena is accessible from Bolzano and Bressanone by SAD bus year-round, and the neighbouring valleys in summer. In summer the hop-on, hop-off Sella Ronda bus, travelling around the circuit, costs €10/5 per adult/child; the Val Gardena card gets you a week's unlimited transport for €60. Regular buses connect the towns along the valley and you can reach the Alpe di Siusi by either bus or cable car. Full timetables are available at the tourist offices.

In winter the Val Gardena Ski Express shuttle bus service links the various villages and lifts in the valley; a €5 ticket covers a week's unlimited travel. Tourist offices have information and schedules about shuttles bringing you directly from Brescia and Bergamo airports to the Val Gardena.

ALPE DI SIUSI & PARCO NATURALE SCILIAR-CATINACCIO

Even in an area that doesn't lack scenery, there's something magical about the view across the green, undulating pastures of Europe's largest plateau, the Alpe di Siusi (1800m to 2200m), which end dramatically at the towering Sciliar peaks.

Walkers of all ages and expertise will find plenty of trails to choose from in this area. The gentle slopes of the Alpe di Siusi are perfect for families with kids, and you won't need much more than average stamina to make it to the **Rifugio Bolzano** (☎ 0471 61 20 24), one of the Alps' oldest mountain huts, which rests at 2457m, just under Monte Pez (2564m), the Sciliar's summit. If you're after really challenging walks, the jagged peaks of the Catinaccio group and the Sassolungo are nearby. These mountains are famous among climbers worldwide. There are also several *vie ferrate* and loads of good trails for mountain bikers. The Catinaccio group can also be approached from the Val di Fassa in Trentino.

Village **tourist offices** (☞ 8am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri, 8am-noon Sat) Castelrotto (☎ 0471 70 63 33; Piazza Kraus 1); Siusi (☎ 0471 70 70 24; Via Sciliar 16); Compaccio (☎ 0471 72 79 04); Fiè allo Sciliar (☎ 0471 72 50 27; Via Bolzano 4) have reams of information on winter activities such as downhill skiing, ski-mountaineering, cross-country skiing and walking trails (with snowshoes) in the area, which is part of the Superski Dolomiti network.

The Alpe di Siusi is accessible by SAD bus from Bolzano, the Val Gardena and Bressanone.

By car, exit the Brenner motorway (A22) at Bolzano Nord or Chiusa. The world's longest **aerial cableway** (seiseralmbahn.it; one way/return €9/12; ☎ 8am-7pm mid-Dec-Mar & mid-May-Oct) is a dizzying 15-minute trip from Siusi to Compaccio. The road linking the two is closed to normal traffic when the cableway is open; visitors with a hotel booking in the zone can obtain a permit from Compaccio's tourist office, allowing them to drive between 4pm and 10am. Organise your pass before arriving in the area. Regular buses operated by **Silbernaagl** (☎ 0471 70 74 00; www.silbernaagl.it) serve the area from Castelrotto and Siusi.

With a good onsite restaurant and breathtaking Alpine vistas, the family-run **Camping Seiser Alm** (☎ 0471 70 64 59; www.camping-seiseralm.com in Italian; San Sostantino, Fiè allo Sciliar; per person €6-8, camp site €6-10, 2-person apt €42-52, 2-person onsite caravan €42-65; 📍) is a great spot. Seasonal closures vary slightly depending on the type of accommodation, but it's generally shut in spring and autumn.

our pick **Hotel Heubad** (Hotel Hay Bath; ☎ 0471 72 50 20; www.hotelheubad.com in Italian; Via Sciliar 12, Fiè allo Sciliar; d half board €122-190; ☎ closed Nov; 📍 📺 📶 📱 🚰) is the area's most charming spot to sleep. Beautifully renovated, the hotel is a haven for Tyrolean hay baths (see the boxed text, p330). Spacious rooms blending light timber and splashes of bright colour open out onto balconies with views of the Alpe di Siusi. In contrast to the contemporary rooms, the original carved-timber restaurant dates back over a century, and serves mountains of traditional Tyrolean fare.

VAL BADIA

Many Ladin legends are set on the nearby Fanes high plain, which forms part of the magnificent **Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies**. This is one of the most evocative places in the Dolomites and can be reached easily from the Val Badia, either on foot or by cable car from Passo Falzarego.

Villages in the valley – Colfosco (1645m), Pedrares (1324m), La Villa (1433m), San Cassiano (1537m) and Corvara (1568m) – together form the Alta Badia ski area, which is part of the Dolomiti Superski domain. Of the Alta Badia's 130km of slopes, it is the Gran Risa ski slope, 4.5km north of Corvara in La Villa, that is undoubtedly the most legendary.

Information

All six villages have tourist offices; the largest are in Corvara and La Villa. The closest public hospital is in Brunico.

Associazione Guide Alpine Val Badia (☎ 0471 83 68 98; guide.valbadia@rolmail.net; Via Burje, Corvara) Advice on skiing, heli-skiing, ice climbing and advanced walking trails. Phone lines are only staffed between 6pm and 7pm.

Corvara tourist office (☎ 0471 83 61 76; www.altabadia.org; Via Col Alt 36; ☎ 8am-noon & 3-6pm Mon-Fri, 9am-noon & 3-6pm Sat, 10.30am-12.30pm Sun) A good source of information.

Helicopter mountain rescue (☎ 0471 79 71 71)

La Villa tourist office (☎ 0471 84 70 37; www.altabadia.org; Via Colz 75; 8am-noon & 3-7pm Mon-Sat, 10am-noon & 4-6pm Sun Dec-Mar & mid-Jun-mid-Sep, reduced hours outside these months).

Activities

The Alta Badia is located on the Sella Ronda (p320), with the best access from Corvara; and forms part of the Dolomiti Superski network (see p305). A cheaper pass for Alta Badia slopes costs just €36/104/160 for one/three/five days; passes are sold at the **ski pass office** (☎ 0471 83 63 66; Via Col Alt 88c). Ski schools are listed online at www.altabadiaski.com.

From the Passo Falzarego (2105m), 20km east of Corvara, a **cable car** ascends into the Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies. Alternatively, pick up trail No 12 from near La Villa or trail No 11, which joins Alta Via No 1 at the Capanna Alpina, a few kilometres off the main road between Passo Valparola and San Cassiano. Either trail takes you up to the Alpe di Fanes and the two *rifugi*, Lavarella and Fanes.

A combination of cable car and chairlift will take you from Corvara up the Gruppo del Sella at Vallon (2550m), where you'll get a spectacular view across to the Marmolada glacier.

Horseback riding, mountain biking and hang-gliding are other popular valley activities. Tandem flights with paragliding school **Centro Volo Libero Alta Badia** (☎ 0471 84 75 92; www.cvl-altabadia.com in Italian & German; Via Bosc da Plan 46, La Villa) start at €65. Tourist offices have a list of places where you can hire mountain bikes; hotels often have bikes for guests.

Sleeping & Eating

Most hotels and restaurants, including those listed here, open from early December to early April and mid-June to early October. Tourist offices can give you information about self-catering apartments.

Posta Zirm Hotel (☎ 0471 83 61 75; www.postazirm.com; Via Col Alt 95, Corvara; s half board €94-139, d half board



TO HEAVEN IN A HAY BATH

The diametric opposite of going to hell in a handcart is surely a soak in the hay.

Hay baths originate from farmers taking a quick, refreshing snooze on their freshly cut hay. The mountain meadows of the Alpe di Siusi's lower slopes – with their aromatic cocktail of grasses, plants and medicinal herbs, such as lavender and thyme – have the best grass. It's cut when damp and left to ferment for several days.

When it's bath time, you strip off your gear (yep, all of it), then lie directly on a mattress strewn with warm, wet hay, which is suspended over a bathtub. More wet hay is massed on top of you, covering everything but your face. The mattress is then lowered into the tub, and as you lie cocooned in the hay, it heats up until you're sweating profusely. Just when you think that you'd rather be out of it (around 15 minutes or so), the mattress is lifted up out of the bath and you're given a towel to wipe off the hay. Then you lie down on a regular bed and are wrapped Egyptian-mummy-like in blankets. And even though you're no longer in contact with the warm hay, your body heats up a second time, and you find yourself sweating all over again. Despite residual hay invariably still sticking to your skin, it's best not to take a shower for several hours to let the herbs work their magic. Taking a hay bath (or ideally, a program of seven) is said to cure all sorts of ailments, but sheer relaxation is reason enough: afterwards, the sensation is almost like floating.

You'll find hay baths in many of the province's spas, but you can't do better – for price or atmosphere – than its first-ever hay-bathing station, **Hotel Heubad** (p329). Opened in 1903, today the hotel is run by its founder's great- and great-great-grandchildren. Even if you're not staying here, you can drop by the hotel for a heavenly hay bath (€30, around 45 minutes all up), provided you book in advance.

(€168-258;  ) Dating back to 1808, this landmark hotel is situated at the top of the street next to Corvara's Sport Kostner shopping complex. The restaurant is highly regarded, and the tavern has the best après-ski scene in town.

La Majun Hotel ( 0471 84 73 03; www.lamajun.it; Via Colz 59, La Villa; d half board €196-300;    ) Panoramic views of the ski fields unfold from the balconies of this gracious, family-run hotel. Tear yourself away from the views to swim in the stone-flagged indoor pool and dine in the excellent restaurant on a bountiful antipasti buffet and fish dishes, as well as sumptuous breakfasts. Perfect if you're looking for something quiet without sacrificing proximity to the ski lifts and shops.

Stüa de Michil ( 0471 83 61 32; www.hotel-laperla.it; Via Col Alt 105, Corvara; set menus €45-65, mains €27-45;  dinner Tue-Sun) Inside the oasis of luxury that is the Hotel La Perla, Stüa de Michil is as enchanting as Alpine restaurants come. Wine bottles line the walls of this candlelit 18th-century cellar, fresh flowers grace the tables, and the Tyrolean cuisine is exquisite.

Getting There & Away

Hourly **SAD buses** ( 800 846 047; www.sad.it) link Alta Badia's six villages with Bolzano (2½

hours) and Brunico (1¼ hours) in winter and summer, with fewer in spring and autumn. Less-frequent services link Corvara with the Val Gardena, Passo Sella and Passo Pordoi, Canazei and the Passo Falzarego. Buses re-route in winter to avoid crossing high mountain passes.

CORTINA D'AMPEZZO

pop 6600 / elev 1224m

Across the Fanes-Conturines range from the Val Badia is one of Italy's most famous, fashionable and expensive ski resorts, Cortina d'Ampezzo. Cortina lies over the regional border in the Veneto, and access roads are infinitely easier to and from the south than from the west.

Cortina's pretty piazzas and stone church spires are surrounded by some of the most stunning mountains in the Alps, including (in a clockwise direction) Cristallo, the Gruppo di Sorapiss-Marmarole, Antelao, Becco di Mezzodi-Croda da Lago, Nuvolau-Averau-Cinque Torri and Tofane. To the south are the Pelmo and the Civetta. Facilities for both downhill and cross-country skiing are first class, and the small town's population swells dramatically during the ski season; great walking and climbing possibilities crowd out the town in summer, too.

Information

Croce Bianca (☎ 0436 86 20 75) Emergency medical aid.

Tourist office (☎ 0436 32 31; www.infodolomiti.it; Piazzetta San Francesco 8; ☎ 9am-12.30pm & 3.30-6.30pm in peak season, shorter hours outside peak season)

Activities

Advanced skiers' hearts could well skip a beat when they stand at the top of the legendary Staunies black mogul run at 3000m, and there are plenty of slopes for skiers and boarders of all abilities, too. Two cable cars whisk walkers and skiers straight into the mountains from Cortina's town centre, from where you can access a web of chairlifts, cable cars and trails. Lifts generally run from 9am to 5pm daily mid-December to early April, and from June to September or early October. The Dolomiti Superski ski pass (p305) covers the resort; passes for Cortina cost €29 to €37 for one day and €85 to €106 for three days. Ski passes are sold at the **ski pass office** (☎ 0436 86 21 71; Via G Marconi 15; ☎ hours vary).

For something different, you can also try dogsledding, scaling frozen waterfalls and ice skating inside Cortina's **Olympic Ice Stadium** (☎ 0436 88 18 11; Via dello Stadio; adult/child incl skate rental €9/8; ☎ seasonal, hours vary), built for the 1956 Winter Olympics. The **Gruppo Guide Alpine Cortina** (☎ 0436 86 85 05; www.guidecortina.com; Corso Italia 69a) organises the usual rock-climbing courses and guided walks for adults, plus history and nature excursions and courses for kids.

Close to Cortina are the **Tre Cime di Lavaredo**, one of the world's most famous climbing locations and a panoramic place to walk. The fact that you can arrive by bus in summer literally at the foot of the Tre Cime means the area swarms with climbers in peak season.

Sleeping & Eating

Cafés and pizzerias and some stellar gourmet restaurants fill Cortina's pedestrianised centre, with pavement seating in summer.

International Camping Olympia (☎ 0436 50 57; www.campingolympiacortina.it; adult €4.50-7.50, tent & car €7-9; Ⓟ) Set beneath towering pine trees, this friendly camping ground, 4km north of Cortina in Fiames, has its own restaurant and pizzeria, and a local bus service connecting it with Cortina.

Hotel Montana (☎ 0436 86 04 98; www.cortina-hotel.com; Corso Italia 94; s/d from €50/77; Ⓟ) Right in Cortina's pedestrianised heart, this 1920s hotel has

snug, comfortable rooms and is an unbeatable two-star deal. Prices listed here are based on a minimum stay of seven nights; contact the hotel to check alternative prices.

Oltres B&B (☎ 0346 520 31 75; www.oltres.com; Loc Campo di Sotto 70; d €70-120; Ⓟ ☎) This charming little B&B is tucked inside a 17th-century house drowsing in a wildflower-filled meadow on Cortina's southeastern outskirts. Timber-panelled rooms have thick quilts and there's a cosy guest lounge.

Getting There & Away

From Cortina **bus station** (Via G Marconi), SAD buses run to Dobbiaco (45 minutes, twice daily), where you can change for Brunico and Bolzano. **Dolomiti Bus** (www.dolomitiibus.it in Italian) serves local destinations including Pocol (15 minutes, nine daily).

VALZOLDANA

This out-of-the-way valley lies just 20km south of Cortina. Valzoldana is indirectly famous for spawning ice-cream parlours across Europe and beyond, established by those villages forced to leave the valley after devastating floods.

Ski runs hug the Civetta group (3220m) at Zoldo Alto. About 80km of runs link the valley to the Dolomiti Superski network, allowing skiers to reach the Sella and Marmolada groups. Keen hikers can take advantage of an extensive network of walking paths. Six days takes more-experienced hikers on a round trip through unspoiled woodland beneath the peaks of less famous mountains such as Sforonio, Bosconero and Pramper. For more information on summer and winter activities and places to stay, contact the Valzoldana tourist office in **Forno di Zoldo** (☎ 0437 78 73 49; fomozoldo@infodolomiti.it; Via Roma 1) or in **Zoldo Alto** (☎ 0437 78 91 45; zoldoalto@infodolomiti.it; Mareson).

The valley is accessed by the S251 that descends from the Forcella Staulanza pass (1789m) in the north to Longarone in the southeast. Coming from the south, leave the S51 at Longarone, following signs to Cortina, and then turn left onto the S251.

VAL PUSTERIA & THE SESTO DOLOMITES

The Val Pusteria is bordered by the magnificent Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies (p329) and by the **Parco Naturale delle Dolomiti di Sesto**, which includes some of the area's most

famous Dolomite peaks – among them the Tre Cime di Lavaredo.

The valley's main centre, **Brunico** (Bruneck in German; population 13,700, elevation 835m), is a surprisingly busy market town for what feels like such a wilderness-engulfed area. **Plan de Coronas**, 4km south of Brunico, offers ample green and blue runs, making it ideal for beginners. The station is linked by cable car to Brunico. The Dolomiti Superski pass can be used here, and gear can be hired in Brunico and Plan de Coronas. Brunico's **tourist office** (☎ 0474 55 57 22; www.bruneck.com; Piazza Municipio 7; ☹ 9am–12.30pm & 3–6pm Mon–Fri, 9am–noon Sat) is the main point of contact for the region, and has detailed information on sleeping and eating options in the town and its surrounding villages and countryside. In the town centre, try **Hotel Blitzburg** (☎ 0474 55 57 23; www.blitzburg.it; Via Europa 10; d half board €90–148; 📍), an atmospheric old place offering big, bright rooms and a sauna.

Easy to reach from the Val Pusteria, Lago di Braies is a peaceful spot for a lakeside stroll. More serious walkers might like to tackle part of the Alta Via No 1, which starts here. Parco Naturale di Fanes-Sennes-Braies is more easily approached from the Val Badia or from Passo Falzarego.

At the other end of the valley, towards Austria, are the Sesto Dolomites, where there are some spectacular trails. The Valle Campo di Dentro, near San Candido, and the Val Fiscalina, near Sesto, are both crisscrossed with walking and cross-country skiing trails. From the Val Fiscalina it's a long but easy walk along trail No 102 to Rifugio Locatelli (2405m), from where you will be able to get a great view of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. Most trails around the Tre Cime are easy enough for inexperienced walkers and families, although they get very crowded in July and August with walkers on the tourist trail. Rafting and mountain biking are on tap in the warmer months.

Getting There & Away

SAD buses travel to Brunico (45 minutes, hourly) and Cortina (one hour, four daily) from San Candido. From Bolzano, there are buses to and from Merano, Val Badia, San Vigilio di Marebbe and Val Gardena (on the Innsbruck bus). From either town sporadic buses and trains go to Dobbiaco, from where buses run to Lago di Braies.

The Val Pusteria is reached by train from Bolzano with a change at Fortezza (40 minutes from Fortezza).

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