



Climbing in the Dolomites of Italy

Situated along the northern border of Italy and Austria the Dolomites are the birthplace of modern alpine rock climbing. The rock is a compact white and grey dolomite and limestone often weathered yellow and the first thing the visitor becomes aware of is the unaccustomed steepness of the walls. Some of the worlds finest climbers learned their craft here. Locals such as Preuss, Solda and Dibona were early climbers and guides here, putting up routes on the steep walls and aretes that were decades ahead of anything done in the USA at that time. This generation was succeeded by the masters of the 30's and 40's; Comici, Cassin, Dimai and others who directly climbed the steepest walls. Places such as the North face of the Cima Grande with it's vast overhangs and shadows were ascended with primitive gear and equipment, soft steel pitons, hawserlaid ropes and no harnesses. Even today these routes demand respect and are serious undertakings. But Italy is also more than fantastic climbing. Small villages and towns dot the valleys and narrow roads snake up into the mountains. We will make a comfortable base in these towns and return to them after a day of climbing to sample the renowned Italian cuisine and wines.

Europe is often crowded, but we choose September when many tourist and visitors have returned home. The Weather is generally fine although there may be some days of bad weather. These are mountains after all.

All in all climbing in Italy is just plain fun.

All trips assume that you will be flying into Munich. This is the most readily accessible destination for those traveling from the USA although there are many other options that we can talk to you about. We will pick up a rental vehicle there and drive south to the climbing areas.

We offer two different trips.

In the Footsteps of the Dolomite Masters and Via Ferrata vacation. Where possible we run these in parallel to make maximum use of van transportation and to reduce program costs.

In the Footsteps of the Dolomite Masters

Some of the best climbs are those put up before and after the second World War. Most are rated in the 5.6 to 5.9 category and while this may not seem too hard by modern standards of 5.14 these are still difficult routes. For this trip we will try and pick the best of the best and combine them in a perfect climbing vacation. Exactly what routes we climb will depend upon a number of factors; participants skill, weather other groups and of course what we feel like that day.

Itinerary: The below is a general routine, subject to change.

Day 0 Arrive in Munich.

Day 1 First actual day of the trip. We will load up the rental vehicle and drive south into Italy. This is about a four hour drive and takes us across Austria and into the mountains. Our first stop will be in the Sella Pass area and the town of Canazei This is in the Val de Fassa a well known tourist spot but also with great climbing. If town allows we will do a quick warm up before going to our hotel in the village of Alba just up valley from Canazei which will be home for the next few days.

Days 3-6 Climbing in the Val de Fassa region. We have lots of choices here and below is a sample of just a few options.

The West Face of the Third Sella Tower 5.8; Lovely but demanding corner and groove climbing on solid rock

The Trenker Route on the First Sella Tower; A classic but a bit polished. Five pitches of up to 5.8 climbing

The Kasnapoff Route on the Second Sella Tower; One of the best. Great exposure and steep grey dolomite 5.8 with a quick pull up on a fixed piton.

The Violet Towers; Just down the valley are these steep towers with great 5 pitch climbs the SW Arete of the Delago Tower climbed in 1911 is one of the best in the Dolomites. A narrow arete with perfect rock just ten minutes from the hut.

The Jahn Route on the Third Sella Tower; Easy but long. Thirteen pitches of only 5.6 maximum following the footsteps of Jahn and Dyhrenfurth.

The Rossi-Tomasi; A little bit of everything; chimney, face and slabs at 5.6 before a walk down the amazing narrow "Ledge of the Chamois". And a fifteen minute stroll from the vehicle and only twenty from the restaurant and bar!

Days 7-9 We will move over to the valley of Cortina a little to the west for the second half of the climbing program. Cortina is a beautiful little town but often very crowded. However at our chosen time of the year there are few people, few climbers, but superb climbing. Routes here vary from short fun routes to long all day affairs.

Some of the options here are;

The Via Merriam on the Torre Grande; A 5.9 first pitch and then four steep wonderful pitches. The first ascent was by the guiding brothers Dimai with American Miriam Underhill in 1927. The route was so good that the guides repeated it six times right afterwards.

The Torre Grande, Guides Route; A perfect 5.6 introduction to the beautiful Cinque Torre with its rock spires and towers scattered amidst high pine forest and alpine grassland.

The Punta Fiames; South of Cortina a few miles but prominent from in town is the "Flames Arete", a knife edge arete that soars to the top of the Fiames. 5.8 climbing on perfect solid rock and one of the great classics of the area.

The Torre di Falzarego; Sunny, warm with fixed protection this splendid arete was first climbed by Emilio Comici in 1934. Combine this with the Torre Grande for a total of eleven wonderful pitches of 5.8

The Second Pillar on the Tofana; The Tofana is a huge mountain with enormous sweeping buttresses and aretes. The second pillar is the sharpest of these and offers 14 pitches with a short 5.9 crux and an easy descent down a trail. A climb to work up to and the perfect culmination of the vacation.

Day 10 Return to Munich.

Via Ferrata Vacation

During the first world war the Dolomites were a fiercely fought and contested area. To supply troops and to fortify positions paths were constructed to the summits of various peaks and plateaus. These fell into disuse after the war, but over the years have been

re to get into technical mountain terrain and to be able to climb with safety. The paths range from easy trails crossing wide ledges to steep technical routes venturing into fifth class climbing terrain. The paths are often equipped with metal ladders up the steep section, rungs here and there for a step and even suspension bridges over narrow, but deep, chasms. All are protected by cables attached by stancions to the rock. The climber is equipped with a pair of fingerless gloves to grip the cables and for protection a

s the climber fall the carabiners side down the cable and stop at the closest stancion.

All this means that it is easy to get out and climb freely. In Italy everyone participates in this unique form of mountain climbing and it is not uncommon to see seventy year old couple climbing alongside of teenagers, everyone out simply having fun in an incredibly spectacular alpine situation. And even better a number of the routes end at a high alpine hut where a snack and a drink are welcome before heading back to the valleys far below.

The general outline of this trip parallels our "Footsteps of the Dolomite Masters" program climbing in the Sella Pass and Cortina areas.

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c A little south in the "Rose Garden" are paths that were made famous in the USA by featured in the movie "Cliff Hanger". (Bad movie, but good scenery).

Day 4 Head over to the Cortina Valley and spend three days climbing here. This area was one of the most violent theaters of war during the First World War and traces still remain with trenches cutting the hillsides. The most unique Via Ferrata here is the

Fe ia them. The Austrians were alerted by the noise (does not seem surprising) and vacated, leaving a spiral tunnel that we can descend through the heart of the mountain. Maybe not climbing as we think of it but an interesting step back in time. More typical climbing is the Via Tomaselli with several thousand feet of fixed cables leading to a remote and wild summit.

Day 10 Return to Munich.

Dates and Prices: Check the latest brochure, call us or go to our web site for dates and rates. Should minimum participant

n conducted at low ratios and so can have the flexibility to customized to individual desires and wishes. Also since ratios are low pricing will depend upon the number of participants and programs we run, reducing the costs of travel, van rentals etc.

Price includes transportation in Italy, hotel stays, huts, climbing equipment and professional guiding. Not included is transportation to Munich or restaurant meals.

Prerequisites: For climbing program you need to have prior rock climbing experience. Ability at about a 5.8 level is appropriate and a general level of comfort means maximizing the pleasure.

For the Via Ferrata vacation there is no need for prior climbing experience, but you do need to have hiking experience and an overall high level of fitness.

Notes: The best guides to the area are "Classic Dolomite Climbs" by Anette Kohler and Norbet Memmel and published in English by the Mountaineers. and "Via Ferratas of the Italian Dolomites; North, Central and East" by John Smith and Graham Fletcher There is also a southern accompanying guide. Get them from Amazon You can get it from Amazon.

Equipment List for Dolomites Climbing and Via Ferrata Vacation

The below are a rough guide. Temperatures vary but in September most days will be warm with cool evenings. Up high on the peaks it can snow so we need to be prepared for that possibility. Rain in the valleys is also possible. You will be hotel camping so extra equipment can easily be left behind.

Climbing equipment

- Harness.* An adjustable style with adjustable leg loops will accommodate changes in layering. Black Diamond Bod harnesses and Misty Mountain Summit harnesses are ideal.
- Helmet. The new designs such as the HB Olympus are comfortable and their light weight encourages use. We provide these if you do not have one
- Two locking carabiners and a belay device.
- Rock shoes: Regardless of what anyone tells you they need to be comfortable! You'll be wearing them most of the day.
- For the Via Ferrata climbs you will need specialized "lobster claws" There are two carabiners, each attached to a short length of rope which then runs through a friction device. The idea is that you always have one of the carabiners attached to the cables/ladders at any time and the friction device absorbs the force of a fall if you should decide to let go. We have these available for you.
- Fingerless leather gloves for teh Via Ferratas. There are special gloves for this but a pair of bike gloves are okay but even better are Metolius belay gloves.

Other essentials

- Footwear. The approaches are generally along trails so a light-weight pair that can also be readily carried up a route in a pack are best.
- Pack. A good quality day pack.

Clothing

- 2 pair synthetic liner socks
- 1 pair heavier synthetic or wool blend socks
- Long underwear top and bottom. Capilene or some other synthetic is most desirable
- Warm pants. Tights or Expedition weight Capilene.

- Warm shirt. Synchilla or 200 weight works well.
- Another fuzzy sweater top or pile jacket of some sort
- GoreTex Jacket and Pants - A lightweight set is sufficient and heavy bulky clothing is unnecessary. Side zips on the pants should be long enough to slide on over boots. The jacket must have a hood. Do not skimp on your rain gear.
- Polypropylene or similar gloves and shells.
- Warm hat.
- Sunhat

Etc.

- Sun glasses. Good quality with side shields.
- Water Bottles. Two 1-quart wide mouth bottles.
- Headlamp. With a spare set of batteries.
- Personal toiletries.
- Personal Medical Kit. The guide will carry a large kit so yours will predominately consist of foot repair items, mild pain killer such as Advil, and bandaids.
- Camera, film and a spare battery to record the summit.
- Optional reading material etc.
- Clothing for traveling in and for around town.