

Storylines

Trento Factfile

Access and airports: Trento, an alpine Renaissance city restored to its ancient splendour, lies at the foot of Monte Bondone in the Italian Dolomites. The closest airport is Verona (90 kms away), with Venice (153 kms) and Milan (213 kms) feasible alternatives, (or Brescia/Verona and Treviso/Venice for low-cost airlines). By road and rail, Trento is connected to Innsbruck, Verona, Brescia and Bologna. In winter, special ski buses connect the city with the local ski slopes.

Castello di Buonconsiglio: Arguably one of the most under-rated castles in Italy, this magnificent residence was home to a succession of prince-bishops until the secularisation of the bishopric in 1802. The castle reflects the changing tastes of the times in its incarnations as medieval stronghold and patrician palace, Austrian military court and much-loved museum. The highlights are the frescoed Gothic tower, the Venetian Renaissance wings, the lavish Baroque apartments, and the so-called Martyrs' Moat.

Cathedral: The Romanesque Cathedral stands on the city's finest square, Piazza Duomo, which is lined by painted or pastel-coloured facades. Early 16th-century modifications to the Cathedral were carried out under Bishop Cles, including the creation of a Gothic-Renaissance archway to grace the north entrance. The rose window, representing the mystical Wheel of Fortune, is the work of the *Maestri Comacini*, the renowned medieval master-builders from Lake Como.

Council of Trent: The city owes its fame to the Council of Trent (1545-1563) which gave rise to the Catholic revival known as the Counter Reformation. The Council was summoned to face the crisis in Catholicism, notably the threat posed by Lutheranism and Calvinism. The Pope and Charles V quibbled about the location, but Trento, set at the intersection between the Italian and Teutonic worlds, seemed the ideal choice: an Italian-speaking town within the German empire. Although Bishop Bernardo Cles, who ruled the city from 1514-34, paved the way for the Council, the process was led by his successor, Cardinal Madruzzo.

European spirit: As a border region, Trentino has been both a battleground and a bulwark against outside enemies. Yet this chequered history, including the city's former role in the Austro-Hungarian empire, has helped forge Trentino's European spirit. Alcide De Gasperi, Italian Prime Minister in the postwar period, was a visionary statesman and an early promoter of European unity who never forgot his roots in Trentino. One of his most famous sayings was: "Either you make history or you succumb to it".

Festivals: As the provincial capital, Trento always has something to celebrate, from an international exhibition to a film festival, or from a food and wine fair to a folkloric event. One of the highlights is the June *Feste Vigiliane*, in honour of the city's patron saint: parades and Renaissance re-enactments culminate in the open-air feasting on the main square. The Christmas food and gifts market on Piazza Duomo is also a picturesque affair. ► For a full list of festivals and events, see the Trento website: www.ap.trento.it.

Further Information: For a provincial map, town map, city itineraries and hotel lists contact the Trentino Information Service in London: tel/fax: 0208-879 1405. Also visit the Trentino website on: www.trentino.to or the Trento website: www.ap.trento.it. In the city itself, call in at the tourist office: APT, Via Mancini 2, Trento (tel: 0039-0461 983880).

Hotels: The city has a wide range of hotels, from an imposing classic city centre hotel to a chic boutique hotel in the historic heart of Trento to a grand hill-top villa on the city outskirts or a simple inn on Monte Bondone. ► Check accommodation on the Trentino website: www.trentino.to; or www.ap.trento.it or through our London office.

Lakes on the doorstep: Less than 30 minutes' drive from the city are the lakes of Caldonazzo and Levico, where swimming and water sports are on offer. Alternatively, romantic Lake Toblino has a delightful setting (and a castle-restaurant) while Riva del Garda, the main resort on the northern end of Lake Garda, is not much further away.

Monte Bondone: Framing the city are the peaks known as Monte Bondone, with panoramic views over the Brenta mountain group. While Monte Bondone is by no means the most dramatic natural sight in Trentino, its slopes represent the city's open-air playground in all seasons. The Botanical Gardens boast such species as foxgloves and eidelweiss, gentians, orchids and lilies, while the snowy slopes come into their own in winter. *See ► *Winter Sports* (below) and also request the *Monte Bondone* brochure from the London office. Also check out the following website: www.montebondone.it.

Myths and legends: Trentino abounds in myths and legends, many of which fuel the local festivities. In Trento itself, Palazzo Fugger, an impressive mansion, was supposedly the scene of a celebrated pact with the Devil. The Augsburg banker, Giorgio Fugger, coveted a splendid Palladian-style palace for his marriage and sold his soul to the Devil to gain Palazzo Fugger. However, the wily bridegroom succeeded in tricking the Devil, who disappeared in a blaze of fire, leaving behind an acrid smell of sulphur and the blackened walls that remain today. ► Request our *Trentino Legends* booklets.

Nature rambles: Typical routes include nature trails around the Botanical Gardens (see *Monte Bondone* above) or walks from the River Adige to the eastern slopes of Monte Bondone, or to the gorge and waterfall at Orrido di Ponte Alto. ► For suggestions as to gentle rambles (and tougher hikes) as well as cycling itineraries just outside the city (which wind through orchards and vineyards) request the *Trento Nature Walks* leaflet.

Painted facades: The partly pedestrianised city centre is lined with impressive mansions, including striking Renaissance palaces adorned with richly-frescoed facades. ► For an unusual series of city strolls, and a description of the main museums, request the *Trento - Walking through the Painted City* leaflet from the London office. (Also see *Renaissance City* below).

Provincial capital: Trento is the capital of Trentino, an autonomous province close to Lake Garda in north-eastern Italy. In 1948, the Trentino-Alto Adige region became self-governing, with the autonomous Trentino province covering the Italian-speaking area and the separate Alto Adige province (often known as the South Tyrol) covering the German-speaking area. The Province of Trentino has its own Parliament, based in Trento itself, a city of 100,000 people, where about a quarter of the population live.

Religious faith: Trentino province is considered one of the most devout places in the country. Both the capital and province make regular donations to charity and are amongst the foremost providers of Catholic missionaries in Italy. ► Request the Storyline: *25 Things you didn't know about Trentino*.

Renaissance city: The city boasts unusual painted facades (*see above*), a legacy of its Renaissance heritage. Culturally, the city flourished under the rule of the prince-bishops, particularly Bishop Bernardo Cles, who ran the city from 1514-34. ► Request *Trento - Walking through the Painted City* leaflet from the London office.

Restaurants: In the culinary clash between Italian and Germanic traditions, *gnocchi*, filling goulash, polenta, game and mushroom risotto are the order of the day. However, pizza and pasta places are also available for those who enjoy classic Italian dishes. ► See *A Taste of Trentino* storyline for more information on food and wine in the area.

Roman remains: The Romans colonised Trento in the first century BC, building on the base of a Gallic settlement. Although most of the Roman town lies four metres below the modern city, parts have been excavated in recent years and put on display. Under the restored Teatro Sociale lies a Roman site, including mosaics and a paved road.

“Strangled priests”: Known as *strangolapreti* in Italian, these distinctive *gnocchi* once represented the staple food of the poor; the name of the dish evokes the popular indignation against the avarice of the powerful clerics, who could afford rich meats.

Summer activities: Since Trento is set in a bowl of mountains, the area is a summer sports paradise for walkers, hikers, climbers and mountain-bikers. ► See *Nature Rambles* (above) and *Lakes on the Doorstep* (below). Also request the *Trento Nature Walks leaflet and Summer Sports Info* from the London office.

Trident: the trident is the city symbol, and a reminder that Trento was christened Tridentum by the Romans. The symbol is best appreciated on the Baroque fountain in Piazza Duomo, where a statue of Neptune, the god of water, bears a trident.

Winter Sports: Monte Bondone (*see above*) is the nearest place to Trento for winter sports, with cross-country runs as well as down-hill slopes. Beginner and intermediate skiers should enjoy the runs but expert skiers will need to extend their range on more challenging slopes in Trentino. Off-piste activities include ice-skating, snow-shoeing, tobogganing and dog-sledding, not to mention mulled wine in cosy inns (*rifugi*). ► Request the *White Magic in Trentino* brochure for more details of winter sports, as well as the *Refuges* booklet. Also check out the following website: www.montebondone.it.