

# ***Storylines***

## **Winter Wonderland: Skiing & Snowboarding**

Set in the heart of the Alps, the Trentino Dolomites are among the most spectacular mountains in the world. With only the mysterious peaks for company, there is often time to reflect in Trentino, unless sliding down a scree or tackling a strenuous ascent. Sunset, in particular, is a time for serenity in these mountains. With their pinnacles and towering spires, the Dolomites are noted for the dazzling enrosadira effect, when the dying rays of sunlight bathe the jagged mountains in a rosy glow.

Trentino's appeal as a winter sports playground is already well-known, confirmed by a recent edition of *The Good Ski Guide*, which lists key Trentino Dolomites resorts as amongst the best in the world for intermediate skiers. As far as Trentino is concerned, any pessimism about the winter sports industry is misjudged: the region has had record seasons in recent years. Indeed, British tour operators specialising in Italy feature more winter holidays in Trentino than in resorts in any rival Italian region. Visitors to Trentino are attracted by the quality of the slopes, hotels and services, with around three million Italians choosing to holiday in Trentino every year. The figure for foreign holiday-makers is not far behind: a total of a million.

The region offers 600 kilometres of downhill runs and 480 kilometres of cross-country trails. These are sunny, well-groomed slopes served by around 300 lifts, with 3000 snowguns providing coverage for approximately 80 per cent of the slopes. In addition, there are numerous floodlit pistes for night-skiing and snow-boarding. For ambitious skiers, certain resorts are also connected to the Sella Ronda and the Dolomiti Superski, which is the world's largest ski network accessible on a single ski pass. Although skiing is the most popular winter sport, snow-boarding is gaining ground, particularly since Trentino hosted the Snowboarding World Championships in 2001.

The established resorts are as fine as any in Italy, with the chic Madonna di Campiglio once favoured by the Aga Khan and film stars, and now the haunt of celebrities such as Michael Schumacher. Celebrities aside, most Trentino resorts provide excellent value for money, and generally offer far better food than in comparable alpine resorts in neighbouring countries. Moreover, the region's 140 cosy lodges or refuges (known as rifugi) cater for the needs of a million visitors a year, with the most popular ones acting as rustic alpine inns. Most are easily reached along marked paths, or by cable car and snowcat. In certain cases, the foolhardy can toboggan back down to the valley floor.

Environmentally, Trentino leads the way in this part of the Alps. Madonna di Campiglio, the best-known ski resort, has opened a tunnel that by-passes the town, thus making it quicker to reach the slopes, but keeping the town cleaner, and more appealing. For skiers, the link to the ski lifts is provided by snow-carpeted tunnels and even a "ski flyover."

Skiing and a suntan are highly probable in Trentino, with most days clear and cloud-free. It is extremely rare to miss even a single day's skiing because of poor weather conditions.

And in the event of poor snowfall, the snow-making facilities go into action. The snow cannons are also used on popular or tricky runs subject to a lot of use. Helped by the efficiency of the snow-making facilities, skiing is generally fine until Easter.

### **Trentino Winter Factfile**

**Alpine Cuisine:** Trentino prides itself on its hearty, warming winter dishes. Prepare for feasts of salami, dumplings, stew and spumante in a rustic alpine refuge. These places are all so cosy and quaint you want to move in immediately, even before the vino and the panoramic views have befuddled the brain. (► See A Taste of Trentino Storyline).

**Combined ski passes:** It is now possible to ski the entire province (and beyond its borders, into the Veneto and Alto Adige regions) on two ski passes: the “Dolomiti Superski” (see below), which also covers the engaging Sella Ronda circuit (see entry below) and the “Skirama Dolomiti Adamello Brenta”, which covers the chic resorts in the west of the province, such as Madonna di Campiglio.

**Cross-country skiing:** The 480 kilometres of cross-country tracks are groomed for both classic and skating styles. Some of the main resorts for cross-country include: Andalo (including night skiing around the Lago di Andalo); the Val di Fiemme (Obereggen-Tesero); Val di Fassa (Canazei; Moena; Passo San Pellegrino); Monte Bondone near Trento (with 32 kms of trails); San Martino di Castrozza and Passo Rolle (with 30 kms of trails); Brentonico; Folgaria, Folgarida-Marilleva (Campo Carlo Magno); Luserna; Pinzolo and Madonna (with 35kms of pleasant trails through the woods). Cross-country skiing enthusiasts can also find floodlit circuits, for instance in the Val di Sole or the Val di Fassa (Pozza di Fassa). Throughout Trentino, there are numerous centres which offer refreshments, ski waxing and even cross-country schools. As for downhill skiing, there are numerous seasonal sporting events, including cross-country marathons (see entry).

**Cross-country marathons:** The Marcialonga is a challenging 44-mile (70 kms) day-long cross-country marathon modelled on the Scandinavian experience. Inspired by those exhilarating Nordic endurance tests, a Trentino world ski champion introduced the event to his lovely valleys, Val di Fiemme and Val di Fassa (see Resorts below).

**Dolomiti Superski:** This superb 750-mile Dolomite circus is served by around 460 ski lifts and provides access to areas beyond Trentino’s borders (notably the Veneto and the Alto Adige regions). The pleasures include an endless array of pistes combined with stunning scenery. Within Trentino, the areas covered are the valleys of Val di Fiemme and Val di Fassa (see Resorts below), as well as the San Martino di Castrozza area.

**Downhill skiing options:** Trentino locks into the Dolomiti Superski area, the 750-mile Dolomite circus (see above). From Canazei or Campitello, it’s onto the Sella Ronda, the challenging round trip that is one of the jewels in the crown of the Dolomites. Alternatively, visitors can choose between numerous ski touring or ski safari options in different areas, not to mention telemark skiing or downhill-racing.

**Extreme sports:** Whether you fancy yourself as an extreme sports champion or simply as a daring enthusiast, Trentino is the perfect terrain for adventurous new challenges. The options include: ski jumping from one of two Olympic ski-jumping centres; climbing frozen waterfalls solidified into turquoise ice sculptures; ski orienteering; ski mountaineering, which pits man against the elements, with daredevil descents of sheer walls of ice; or charting a wilderness of open crevasses, narrow chutes and giddy towers.

**Ongoing modernisation programme:** The region is also noted for its commitment to fully modernising lifts, and to the introduction of 6-seater chairlifts (6-pack) or four-seater chairlifts (quads), which replace the older two or three-seater chairlifts. Both of these have been recently introduced in Canazei, for instance. Elsewhere, in Madonna di Campiglio, for instance, there are new travelator or “magic carpet” chairlifts with moving walkways which help novice skiers to climb aboard, or to link areas more conveniently; for instance, a new bridge links the popular Groste slopes to Pradalago. Throughout the region, snow-making facilities, which are already excellent, are being extended. The introduction of the electronic key card also makes for speedier access through ski lifts.

**Safety on the mountain:** As an autonomous province, Trentino imposes its own strict safety requirements. In addition, over 900 volunteers are available to assist the emergency services in the event of a crisis or mountain rescue operation.

**Sella Ronda:** The Sella Ronda is a rewarding but fairly testing skiing circuit around the Sella group, with access through the gateway resorts of Canazei and Campitello at one end of the valley. Depending on the route (plus ski lifts and diversions taken) the Sella Ronda is a round trip of up to 50 kilometres, and can be done clockwise or anti-clockwise. The circuit should take up to a day, but much depends on skiing ability and the diversions taken; if you take all the shortcuts (which makes for a less interesting route) then it can conceivably be covered in well under a day. As one of the jewels in the crown of the Dolomites, the circuit boasts superb scenery and is favoured by good intermediate skiers. However, expert skiers will also be challenged if they choose to follow such diversions as the four Olympic runs linked to the Sella Ronda. The villages are connected by a free bus service, with the Trentino resorts only covered by the Val di Fassa ski pass.

**Snowboarding:** Snowboarding is the fastest-growing area of winter sports and Trentino is at the forefront of the discipline in Italy, especially in terms of dedicated snow-parks. A further boost was given to local winter sports fans by the decision to stage the 2001 World Snowboarding Championships in the resort of Madonna di Campiglio. The hordes-on-boards go to specialised snowboarding “snow-parks” in such resorts as Canazei, Monte Bondone, Folgarida-Marileva in the Val di Sole, and Madonna di Campiglio, which has a popular snowpark at Groste with a half-pipe and boarder-cross course. ► Also see the new snowboarding section on the Trentino website: [www.trentino.to](http://www.trentino.to).

**Trentino alpine guides:** The region boasts over 130 qualified alpine guides, who are linked to the main Trentino alpine clubs (see above). The guides’ prime function is to

lead individuals and groups of all ages in alpine pursuits and to run courses on everything from mountain safety to rock climbing, ski mountaineering and extreme sports.

### **Trentino resorts & ski areas:**

The following list is far from exhaustive but offers a flavour of the main ski areas.

\***Andalo** and the **Altopiano della Paganella** offer downhill and cross-country slopes.

\***Canazei**, set below forested slopes in the **Val di Fassa**, is an appealing resort with skiing unto 2638 metres. Canazei is also the main Trentino gateway to the excellent **Sella Ronda** (see entry), which provides some of the most varied and challenging skiing for confident intermediates and above.

\***Campitello** has good nursery slopes as well as well as 9 ski lifts, essentially serving intermediate skiers. Like Canazei, its bigger neighbour, the low-key resort of Campitello ties into the varied **Sella Ronda** (see entry).

\***Madonna di Campiglio**, set at the foot of the Brenta range, is a fashionable former Hapsburg retreat which remains a chic resort. The appeal, apart from its cachet, are the 90 kilometres of slopes, particularly suitable for intermediates, and the newly-pedestrianised village which boasts excellent apres-ski.

\*Nearby is the modest but child-friendly resort of **Pinzolo** and also **Passo Tonale**, near the Lombardy border, with Tonale famous for its summer skiing on the **Presena glacier**; the resorts provide a gateway to the Adamello Presanella range.

\*Madonna is linked to **Folgarida-Marilleva**, a ski area which straddles the **Val Rendena** and the **Val di Sole**, and encompasses pistes of varying difficulty, including challenging black runs.

\***Folgaria** is part of an extensive ski area, with a section known as the Skitour dei Forti, which evokes the Austro-Hungarian forts that still dot the hills.

\***Moena**, in the **Val di Fassa**, (see entry below) provides for skiing in a sunny, open bowl, with panoramic views from the slopes.

\***Monte Bondone** offers the closest skiing to Trento, but the ski network is limited to 9 ski lifts and 15 kilometres of pistes (► see the Trento Fact File Storyline).

\***San Martino di Castrozza** is a celebrated resort set in a glorious alpine amphitheatre of deep forest and pink-tinged mountain peaks. These summits were first scaled and charted by British mountaineers. (► See Storyline on the British Mountaineers).

\*Nearby are **Passo Rolle**, **San Martino Pejo** in the Stelvio national park, and **Primiero**.

\***The Val di Fassa resorts**, which include **Canazei**, **Campitello** and **Moena**, (see separate entries) are amongst the most varied and appealing ski areas in the region.

\***The Val di Fiemme resorts**, which include **Cavalese** and **Predazzo**, are associated with the Marcialonga cross-country marathon (see entry) but also offer good downhill skiing.

► For information on winter press trips, resort facilities or UK tour operators who offer Trentino in winter, contact the London Trentino Info Service. Also request the Trentino Winter Traditions (plus CD rom) and the Winter Holiday Offers brochures. To find out about winter activities that don't include skiing, request the Storyline: Winter Activities Off the Slopes.