

Italy: The Dolomites, Bolzano to Ora

Bike Vacation Only

If you've ever dreamed of cycling the Giro d'Italia's Pordoi Pass, this is your chance! Of course, we've planned it so you won't have to do all the work: a shuttle to the top lets you coast down, navigating the switchbacks that have thrilled Giro d'Italia fans for years. Here, you'll feel the awe-inspiring presence of the Queen of the Dolomites—the mountain's highest peak. During your orientation meeting, your VBT Local Host sets you up for independent exploration, fitting you with a well-maintained bike, a navigation app with route notes, and a number you can call 24/7 if you need support. Along the way, you'll spin along quiet bike paths through the high mountain valleys of Val di Fassa and Val di Fiemme—staying at quaint local hotels suffused with South Tyrol's famous culture, cuisine, and cycling.

Cultural Highlights

- Cycle from one small alpine city to another, taking in rich cultures steeped in remarkable history.
- Ride through the diverse landscapes of the Dolomites, from vineyard-covered hills and emerald-green valleys to sylvan forests, dramatic foothills, and a 7,000-foot mountain pass.
- Coast down a mountainside from Pordoi Pass, navigating 33 switchbacks over six miles along roads made famous by Italian cycling legend Fausto Coppi.
- Revel in some of Europe's best-maintained bike paths—stellar routes that make up 90% of this itinerary.
- Sample the culinary delights of South Tyrol, from alpine cheeses and *speck* (cured ham) to Pinot Noirs along the famed Wine Route.

What to Expect

This tour features a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills, making it ideal for both beginner and experienced cyclists. Rides are primarily on well-paved, dedicated bike paths that are well maintained, clearly marked, and exceptionally scenic. Expect gradual uphill riding during the first three days. On the day you descend the mountain pass, anticipate 10 km (6.2 miles) of downhill riding on a wide road that may be busy with car traffic during the summer. Please verify your bike selection for this tour as it is not always possible to change bikes once you arrive on tour. Travel with your friends and family—we can accommodate multiple guests on this self-guided vacation. Our 24/7 support system is available if needed.

Tour Duration: 6 Days

Average Daily Mileage: 27-46 miles

Average Cycling Time: 3-5 hours

Climate Information

Average High/Low Temperature (°F)

May 74°/49°, June 80°/55°, July 85°/59°, August 83°/59°, September 77°/52°, October 66°/42°

Average Rainfall (in.)

May 3.2, June 3.2, July 3.6, August 3.6, September 2.6, October 2.2

DAY 1: Your VBT Vacation Begins / Bolzano to Bressanone / Move on Day

We suggest arriving in Europe at least one day prior to your tour start date, as your Self-Guided Bicycle Vacation begins at 10:30 a.m. Make your own independent travel arrangements to our meeting point hotel in Bolzano: Parkhotel Laurin, where your VBT adventure begins.

If you arrive in Bolzano with a bit of extra time, consider enjoying a coffee at a local café or a short stroll nearby. With its blend of Austrian and Italian influences, café-lined arcades, and alpine charm, Bolzano offers a warm and welcoming introduction to the region.

At 10:30 a.m., meet your VBT Local Host in the lobby of the Parkhotel Laurin for your Welcome Orientation, along with any other VBT guests arriving on the same day. Please be dressed and ready for cycling. Your Local Host will be carrying a VBT sign.

During today's ride, get acquainted with your bicycle and ease into the rhythm of Italy and its efficient network of bike paths. Your route follows the Isarco River's deep valley toward Bressanone. Along the way, admire the 1687 Abbey of Sabiona, perched high on an outcropping, and consider a stop in the red-roofed village of Chiusa, where bike shops and cafés await.

The charming medieval town of Bressanone (also known by its German name, Brixen) is located in South Tyrol, part of Italy's Trentino-Alto Adige region. This province was part of Austria until 1918, and today, many locals speak more German than Italian. Known as the "Ancient Bishop's City," Bressanone is nestled between two rivers and framed by mountains that slope into vineyards and orchards. Its Old Town is a picturesque blend of cobblestone lanes, pastel buildings, and historic bridges.

Your accommodations tonight are at Hotel Krone, a comfortable and modern hotel located right in the heart of the Old Town. Its convenient location makes it easy to explore Bressanone on foot,

while its spa and wellness area offer the perfect place to unwind after your ride.

This evening, choose a restaurant and enjoy a taste of South Tyrolean cuisine. Local specialties include Alto Adige wines, cured ham (*speck*), regional cheeses, spinach-filled ravioli (*Schlutzkrapfen*), river trout, local game, lamb, and apple strudel.

Today's Ride Choices

Bolzano to Bressanone — 43 km (27 miles) | Bressanone City Walk — 2 km (1 mile)

What to Expect:

You ride from your meeting hotel in Bolzano to Bressanone along a well-marked, paved bike path that includes a few short tunnels. The route gains elevation steadily throughout the day, but without any steep climbs—the ascent is gradual and barely noticeable. After approximately 30 km, consider stopping for a visit and a coffee or snack in the picturesque town of Chiusa. We recommend planning to arrive in Bressanone early, allowing time to explore this medieval town on foot. You might follow the walk recorded in Ride with GPS, specially created by our local expert guides. See D1 Bressanone City Walk for the suggested walking route, services, and points of interest.

Cumulative Distance Range: 43 km (27 miles)

DAY 2: Cycle to Brunico via Bike Paths / Move on Day

Linger over breakfast as long as you'd like. At your leisure, cycle out of Bressanone on a paved bike path, heading toward Brunico. As you leave the vineyard-draped valleys behind, you begin to approach the foothills of the Alps.

Shortly after Bressanone, you'll reach the impressive Abbey of Novacella, founded in 1142. This remarkable complex—constructed over a span of 900 years—features a fascinating blend of architectural styles, from Romanesque to Gothic and Baroque. In the same year the abbey was established, the monks planted a vineyard, making the monastery winery one of the oldest still in operation. The region is renowned for producing exceptional white wines. Take time to visit the winery, or simply relax at the abbey café and restaurant for a drink or lunch.

From Novacella, you have two route options: a longer, scenic loop through Fortezza, partially on

unpaved terrain, where you can admire the imposing Franzenfeste fortress—built by the Austrians nearly two centuries ago to defend the border—or a shorter, paved route. Both paths bring you into the Pusteria Valley, one of the longest east–west valleys in the Alps.

If you're feeling energetic once you arrive in Brunico, consider the extended ride into the spectacular Auer Valley and the picturesque old market town of Campo Tures, watched over by the hilltop Taufers Castle.

In Brunico, make your way to your accommodations at Hotel Post, ideally located on the town's historic main street, Via Bastioni. This elegant, family-run hotel combines modern comfort with alpine charm. After your ride, you might unwind in the hotel's inviting wellness area, which includes saunas, a steam bath, and a relaxation room—perfect for recharging before dinner. The stately trees lining the road now stand where a defensive moat once surrounded the castle. Today, the old fortification houses the Messner Mountain Museum RIPA, founded by legendary climber Reinhold Messner—a worthwhile stop if time allows. You might also enjoy browsing the inviting shops and historic buildings along Via Centrale, or wandering the narrow vaulted side streets in search of local crafts and clothing, such as felt hats, leather shoes, and even a Dolomites cycling jersey. Keep in mind that many shops close as early as 6:00 p.m..

Follow your nose—or the advice of your hotel—and choose a local restaurant for dinner, perhaps sampling a South Tyrolean specialty.

Today's Ride Choices

Bressanone to Novacella — 3 km (2 miles) | Novacella to Brunico — 35 km (22 miles) OR Novacella to Fortezza to Brunico — 43 km (27 miles) | Brunico to Campo Tures Out-and-Back — 33 km (21 miles)

What to Expect:

Departing Bressanone, your route primarily follows well-maintained bike paths to Brunico. You'll have a choice between two routes: a shorter, fully paved option (ideal for road bikes) that includes a climb to Novacella Abbey, or a slightly longer route—about 3 miles (5 km) more—that features a panoramic stretch on a gravel path to the Fortezza fortress (less ideal for road bikes). Afterward, you'll continue with a very gradual climb to Brunico, with a few short, steeper hills. The path then levels out as you approach your destination. Much of the ride follows the Rienza River. In Brunico, a longer loop on mostly country roads leads you into a wide, green valley and through several traditional villages en route to Campo Tures. The route loops around and then

through the village before returning along the same path to Brunico. It's a scenic and relaxing ride, offering sweeping views of the northern Alps. If you prefer to explore Brunico today, you may save this loop ride for tomorrow.

Cumulative Distance Range: 38 or 46 or 79 (24 or 29 or 50 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 3: San Candido to Brunico / Stay Put Day

After breakfast, ride to the nearby railway station and board a local train to San Candido in the Pusteria Valley. Your ticket is included, and trains run every 30 minutes from early morning. This ancient town, near the Austrian border, grew up around its abbey, founded in 769. Visit the Romanesque Duomo della Collegiata—the oldest monastery in the Dolomites—and enjoy a drink from one of the many stone fountains in the cobblestone pedestrian zone. Consider stopping at a local market or café for a takeaway lunch to enjoy later.

Set out on your mostly downhill ride, arriving at the beautiful Toblacher Lake, an ideal spot for a scenic picnic. Continue back to Brunico along riverside bike paths, passing through picturesque villages and peaceful forests. As you ride, you'll notice that the dominant language is German and that the architecture and culture reflect the region's Austrian heritage.

For a longer and more pastoral ride, consider branching off into the Casies Valley, known for its unspoiled nature, pristine forests, and cattle grazing in lush meadows. This route loops around the St. Magdalene Parish Church

at the head of the valley. Along the way, you may wish to stop at a mountain hut for a coffee or snack.

We recommend setting aside time this afternoon to take the funicular to the summit of Plan de Corones at 7,464 feet

(2,275 meters). The panoramic views of South Tyrol from the top are breathtaking. If time permits, visit LUMEN

– Museum of Mountain Photography, located at the summit. This striking, modern museum blends architecture and alpine storytelling in a truly unique space. You may also wish to dine here. Be sure to check the last funicular departure and plan your day accordingly.

Today's Ride Choices

Hotel Post to Brunico Train Station — 0.6 km (⅓ mile) | San Candido to Brunico — 41 km (25 miles) OR
San Candido to Val Casies and Brunico — 76 km (48 miles)

What to Expect:

Expect a 40-minute train ride to San Candido. Getting your bike on the train is easy, as the region's infrastructure supports environmentally friendly and active lifestyles. Before boarding, validate both your Guest Pass (provided at hotel check-in) and the bike ticket given to you by your host. Write your name and the date of your stay on the Pass—it remains valid for a week and can be reused for free train rides and museum entries. Validation machines with a blue button are located on the station walls. San Candido is the final stop on the line, and your ride begins in this picturesque small city, where you may wish to park your bike, explore, and pick up lunch for a picnic. The route is mostly downhill and well paved for the first miles, then becomes gently rolling after Monguelfo, alternating between forested unpaved paths along the Rienza River and short paved stretches on quiet country roads. In Monguelfo, a longer option continues steadily uphill into the peaceful Casies Valley, following a well-beaten unpaved trail through a charming and quiet landscape. In the event you get tired and prefer to shorten your bike ride, you can board a train back to Brunico—simply validate your bike ticket again (it's valid all day), and your Guest Pass remains usable for several more days.

Cumulative Distance Range: 42 or 76 km (25 or 48 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 4: Pordoi Pass to Cavalese / Move on Day

After breakfast, depart at 8:15 a.m. for a scenic 60-minute drive to one of the four most iconic passes of the Dolomites. The Badia Valley leads you into the heart of the Sella Group, where the Campolongo, Pordoi, Sella, and Gardena passes unfold among majestic peaks.

There's no need to hop on your bike immediately upon arriving at Pordoi Pass. If you'd like, you can take the funicular to Sassolungo Peak, reaching 9,400 feet. The views from here are astonishing. Pordoi is also a pilgrimage site for cyclists, many of whom come to honor Italian cycling legend Fausto Coppi, five-time Giro d'Italia winner in the 1940s and '50s. Each year, the first rider to reach the highest summit in the Giro is awarded the Cima Coppi prize, named in his honor. In the event of inclement weather, you may stay on the shuttle to Canazei or

further—your ride can begin at any point, or you may opt to skip riding altogether and spend the day relaxing at your hotel's spa or strolling Cavalese.

As you descend, you'll navigate the famous 27 switchbacks—a thrilling ride made all the more enjoyable by the wide road and gentle grade. It's remarkable to think that champions ride this section uphill! With dramatic Dolomite panoramas unfolding at every turn, you'll want to take your time and soak it all in. Your invigorating descent ends in Canazei, where a scenic bike path leads you toward your final destination for the day.

A longer and more challenging option takes you up two of the four famous Sella Ronda mountain passes: the Gardena Pass (2,121 m) and the Sella Pass (2,240 m). If you choose this route, alert your driver to stop in Corvara. From there, ascend both iconic passes before rejoining the standard route to Canazei.

As you travel through this region, you may hear a language unfamiliar to you. Don't worry—it's not the altitude! Locals are likely speaking Ladin, a centuries-old language still spoken in four valleys of this region, including Fassa and Fiemme. This rare language is actively preserved and taught in local schools.

Nature and history blend deeply in this part of northern Italy. The red spruce reigns here, and much of the surrounding forest belongs to the townspeople and the Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme, a unique institution that governed the valley for over seven centuries. Wood from these trees has long been valued—historically for its economic impact, and today for building some of the world's finest violins and pianos. The tradition lives on, as visitors continue to flock here for nature, clean air, and outdoor activities like cycling.

During the second leg of your ride, you'll follow a gentle path along the Avisio River, passing painted alpine villages set against the backdrop of the Catinaccio, Latemar, and Lagorai mountain groups. Your destination is the village of Cavalese, at 3,000 feet. You'll have time to visit the Church of the Assunta, dating to 1112, and the Banco de la Reson, a historic meeting place of the Magnifica Comunità di Fiemme.

Tonight, you'll stay at Hotel La Roccia, a welcoming, family-run alpine retreat perched just above Cavalese. This 4-star hotel offers panoramic views of the Fiemme Valley and the Dolomites, along with a full wellness center featuring a sauna, steam bath, and a beautiful indoor/outdoor pool—perfect for relaxing after a rewarding day of cycling.

After your memorable day in the Dolomites, unwind in the hotel's spa or take in the view of Mount Cermis

from the terrace. For dinner, enjoy regional specialties such as *cajoncie* ravioli or pasta made from locally produced organic durum wheat, served at the hotel's well-regarded restaurant.

Today's Ride Choices

Pordoi Pass to Cavalese via Funicular — 53 km (33 miles) OR Pordoi Pass to Cavalese via Road — 55 km (34 miles) OR Corvara to Cavalese via Two Mountain Passes — 72 km (45 miles)

What to Expect:

Your ride from Pordoi Pass begins with a 10 km (6-mile) descent at an average gradient of 8%, along a wide, well-paved road featuring 33 switchbacks. Be alert, as the route is popular with motorbikes, cars, and other cyclists. The following 45 km (27 miles) are smooth and scenic, with only a few gentle hills. You'll follow a bike path through traditional villages and alpine meadows, passing waterfalls and even a man-made swimming lake (Biolago), where you may wish to stop for a swim and lunch. Toward the end of the ride, you can either continue gently uphill to Cavalese or take the Cermis funicular with your bike (open from mid-June to approximately September 25, at 5:00 p.m.). The more challenging option begins in Corvara and includes two mountain pass climbs, a series of ups and downs, and a final descent with 14 switchbacks. Even if you're not a seasoned cyclist, this route is manageable on an E-bike—we recommend recharging your battery during your possible lunch stop in Canazei.

Cumulative Distance Range: 53 or 72 km (33 or 45 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 5: Cavalese to Ora and Bolzano / Move on Day

Savor an excellent buffet breakfast on the hotel terrace, with sweeping views of the Lagorai mountain group. Then set out along a beautiful new bike path toward the San Lugano Pass—a small pass connecting the Fiemme Valley with the Adige River Valley. Your route follows the Vecia Ferrovia, a historic railway built during World War I by Russian prisoners and recently converted into a scenic cycling trail. Shortly after the pass, you'll ride through a dense forest

before descending into a rare alpine wine region known for its excellent Pinot Noir. Along the region's famed Wine Route, stop in the village of Pinzano, where frescoed houses and cobbled streets create an inviting atmosphere. This is a great place to enjoy lunch and sample the local wines.

As the views open into the broad Adige Valley, you'll approach the village of Ora. From here, you can choose to continue riding along a flat riverside bike path or take the local train to reach Bolzano more quickly.

The rest of the day is yours to explore from your centrally located hotel. If you didn't have the chance prior to your tour, consider visiting the Archaeological Museum of Bolzano to see Ötzi the Iceman—the naturally mummified remains of a man who lived over 5,000 years ago and was preserved in glacier ice. The exhibit includes his body and a wide array of fascinating research about life during the Copper Age. If you've already seen the museum, Bolzano offers plenty more to enjoy: stroll through the Old Town, admire the architecture around Piazza Walther, or visit the Museion for contemporary art. The city is also a wonderful place to shop for Italian and alpine fashion, leather goods, and local food specialties.

Today's Ride Choices

Cavalese to Ora Train Station — 40 km (26 miles) OR Cavalese to Bolzano — 59 km (36 miles)

What to Expect:

After a gradual ascent on an auto road departing Cavalese, you'll tackle a few short, steep hills before reaching the San Lugano Pass at 3,300 feet, accessed via a newly paved bike path. After crossing the pass, the route continues along a long, well-beaten unpaved bike path through a biotope, with occasional stretches on paved country roads. Keep your speed under control, as the route is mostly downhill until you near Ora. Just before reaching the town, Imbiss Castelfederer, clearly visible from the path, makes a good informal stop for lunch and restrooms. The short option ends at the Ora train station, where you'll need to validate the bike ticket provided by your host at the start of the tour (if you no longer have it, you can purchase and validate a new one at the station). Please use your Guest Pass as your train ticket. Most trains to Bolzano run between 3:00 and 4:00 p.m., and the journey takes just 20 minutes. If you prefer to continue cycling, the bike path to Bolzano is perfectly flat and well paved, delivering you directly to Bolzano's main square and the Parkhotel Laurin garage. If you plan to visit the Archaeological Museum in Bolzano, be sure to check the website for last entry and closing times.

Cumulative Distance Range: 40 or 59 km (26 or 36 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6: Your VBT Vacation Ends

Enjoy breakfast at your hotel. Check-out is at 12:00 p.m. Depending on your final destination, it may not be possible to return to the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please review airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule a return flight immediately following the tour's conclusion, be sure to contact your airline directly for specific check-in requirements. Your *Vacation Preparation Handbook* includes suggestions for onward travel options from Bolzano.

Included Meals: Breakfast

Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

Hotel Krone (Day 1)

Conveniently located in the heart of the city, Hotel Krone boasts a combination of traditional and modern ambience. Its excellent location makes the Old Town and its myriad of cobblestone alleyways, specialty food shops, boutiques, restaurants, and historic sights easy to explore on foot. Plus, you'll receive a complimentary BrixonCard providing free public transportation, admission to more than 90 museums, a ride on the Plose gondola lift, and much more. Take advantage of the rooftop full-service spa with city views and the adjacent garden.

Hotel Post (Days 2-3)

Ideally located in the social and cultural hub of Brunico, the stylish Hotel Post was designed with inspiration from the great outdoors of South Tyrol and the Dolomites. Occupying a former post office, today it embodies an urban sophistication, with a welcoming lobby and bright, recently refurbished rooms with wood accents. During your stay, treat yourself to a spa treatment and enjoy an elegant meal or artisan drink in Cosmo. Breakfast is served overlooking the main square, where a weekly market takes place every Wednesday.

Hotel La Roccia (Day 4)

Located just outside Cavalese, but within walking distance, the Hotel La Roccia enjoys a spectacularly scenic location. Magnificent views of the Dolomites unfold from the breakfast terrace and infinity pool. The spa is constructed with the wood of Fiemme, locally beloved for centuries for its texture, warmth, and aroma. Rooms are designed in a mountain style and with furnishing designed by the renowned craftsmen of the Fiemme Valley. The onsite restaurant serves plentiful breakfasts. For dinner, try the restaurant's local specialties, like the ravioli and pasta made of organic durum wheat.

Parkhotel Laurin (Day 5)

One of Bolzano's elegant properties, the Parkhotel Laurin occupies one of the most beautiful buildings in town. Its intimate bar is full of lush fresco paintings depicting the saga of King Laurin. The air-conditioned hotel houses other unique artwork, as well. Its collection includes around 200 original 20th-century works, from woodcuts to canvas pieces, from Impressionism to German New Objectivity. Exquisite works can also be found in the guestrooms and parlors and in the hotel's private park. The breakfast room is adorned with decorative hand-painted wallpaper.