

## Italy: The Dolomites, Bolzano and Lake Garda

### Bike Vacation Only

They say imitation is the sincerest form of flattery—and this original VBT tour was the first of many copycats to combine easy Dolomite bike paths with the stunning scenery of Lake Garda. With our deep roots in the region, it's the local connections that make this itinerary a standout. Visit a local farm in Valle dei Laghi where you'll meet the owners and learn about the ancient method of crafting vino santo—plus observe the preparation of carne salada, a unique Trentino specialty. In Madonna di Campiglio, you'll meet an authentic alpine cheesemaker and learn how cows graze in the high mountain valleys. As you pedal easy bike paths with stunning views of the Dolomites' high peaks, your local trip leaders will introduce you to the people who call this incredible region home.

### Cultural Highlights

- Enjoy a wine tasting at a mountain hamlet famous for its Gewürztraminer.
- Savor house-made specialties from the gourmet restaurant of your 5-star hotel in a ski-resort town beloved by celebrities.
- See spectacular mountains rising around you as you ride through dramatic canyons and ravines.
- Cycle a Mediterranean-like paradise on the shores of Lake Garda.
- Explore the old town of Bolzano, where you can marvel at the museum's renowned glacier mummy, Oetzi the Iceman.

### What to Expect

This tour offers a combination of easy terrain and moderate hills and is ideal for both beginner and experienced cyclists. About 70% follows bike paths. All the roads are paved. One ride starts at 4,500-foot (1,372-meter) elevation in a mountain environment, gradually losing elevation. On two days, both easy and moderate options are given. Our VBT support vehicle is always available for those who would like assistance with the hills.

**Tour Duration:** 7 Days

**Average Daily Mileage:** 3-32 miles

**Average Cycling Time:** 1-4 hours

**Group size:** 14-20 max

### Climate Information

### **Average High/Low Temperature (°F)**

May 74°/49°, June 80°/55°, July 85°/59°, August 82°/59°, September 77°/52°, October 66°/42°

### **Average Rainfall (in.)**

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

## **DAY 1: Meet in Bolzano / VBT Bicycling Vacation begins / Warm-up ride**

Your tour starts at 2:00 p.m. at our Bolzano hotel. A safety and bike-fitting session with your trip leaders and fellow travelers will be held immediately at 2:00 p.m.

Later, enjoy a warm-up ride along easy, scenic bike paths outside the city. You will cycle along the Talfer River to the Talfer Meadows and the base of the medieval Runkelstein Castle, one of the most majestic castles in the valleys surrounding Bolzano. As you ride along the Isarco River, the Rosengarten range rises before you. The summits of these mountains change color to various shades of red and purple during sunset. Legend attributes this magical show to the dwarf King Laurin, who was said to be able to change the hue of his favorite roses in the twilight.

This evening, gather for a welcome cocktail at the legendary hotel bar and admire the unique artwork and fresco paintings depicting the saga of King Laurin. The entire hotel collection includes around 200 original 20th-century works, from woodcuts to canvas pieces, from Impressionism to German New Objectivity. Exquisite works can be found in the guestrooms, parlors, and the hotel's private park.

Tonight, a special welcome dinner will be served in the elegant rooms or terrace of your hotel.

### Today's Ride Choices

Afternoon: Warm-up – 15 km (9 miles)

### What to Expect:

The warm-up ride takes you on the outskirts of the city to the base of the Runkelstein Castle. As you approach the castle, you'll encounter a gradual uphill. The entire ride is on bike paths, which you'll follow into Bolzano's main square. You will need to walk your bike for a very short stretch to your hotel, located right in the heart of the old city.

Cumulative Distance Range: 15 km (9 miles)

Included Meals: Dinner

## DAY 2: The Wine Road to Lake Caldaro / Wine tasting

After a hearty buffet breakfast, you will cycle directly from your hotel, following an easy bike path out of town along the Isarco River. The landscape opens up as you skirt the foot of Sigmundskron Castle, one of six mountain museums established by the famed South Tyrolean mountaineer, Reinhold Messner, and dedicated to mountain people and culture.

At the confluence of the Adige and Isarco Rivers, the route gently climbs past the sloping vineyards of the Kalterer Valley. As you ascend, marvel at the views of the valley surrounded by soaring mountains. Your route will remain easy for the rest of the day. Pause for lunch in Kalter, a mountain village famous for its wines, mostly produced from the indigenous variety called Vernatsch that has been cultivated in South Tyrol since the sixteenth century. Stop at one of the oldest wine cellars for a wine-tasting visit.

Early this afternoon, you will cycle by Lake Caldaro, the warmest bathing lake in the Alps, and continue your alpine route on an easy bike path along the Adige River. This rewarding ride leads back to your hotel.

You have the rest of the day to stroll the beautiful Old Town of Bolzano, exploring its narrow alleys, old manor houses, and Romanesque and Gothic structures famously constructed by the Schiche brothers from Augsburg, Germany. You might stop to visit the Museum of Archaeology, whose main attraction is Oetzi the Iceman, the famous glacier mummy discovered fully clothed in 1991. The food culture of this alpine town is evident in its wide variety of organic food shops and a street market selling fresh products from nearby farms. Indulge in the local bounty when you choose a restaurant for dinner on your own. South Tyrol's excellent cuisine is reflected in its numerous award-winning restaurants. In 2023, the Bolzano province's restaurants received a record 19 Michelin stars, thus ranking third after Naples and Rome.

### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Bolzano to Caldaro — 18 km (11 miles)

Afternoon: Caldaro to Bolzano with Shuttle — 13 km (8 miles) OR Caldaro to Bolzano — 32 km (20 miles)

What to Expect:

This morning's ride follows a well-paved bike path along mostly flat or very gradually ascending terrain, with the exception of one long uphill that can be skipped by taking a five-minute support vehicle shuttle.

In the afternoon, glide downhill from Caldaro for a beautiful ride past vineyards to Lake Caldaro. Then, follow the flat and well-paved Adige River bike path all the way back to the hotel. To shorten the afternoon ride, you may take a one-stop train ride from Ora to Bolzano.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 – 50 km (8 – 31 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast

## DAY 3: Bike the Sole Valley / Madonna di Campiglio

Setting off this morning, you will skirt the Noce River, following a well-paved bike path into the verdant Sole Valley—a spectacular expanse of emerald green, watched over by the dramatic Stelvio National Park mountain range to the north and the Adamello and Brenta Dolomites Natural Reserve to the south. This invigorating ride starts in the unspoiled Pejo Valley along the tranquil river, and continues through open meadows and shaded spruce woods, passing apple orchards and scenic picnic areas that beg you to stop a moment and take it all in. Later, the magnificent Ortles-Cevedale mountain range appears. A particularly charming highlight of the morning is the village of Pellizzano, an ancient cluster of stone buildings and a frescoed medieval church.

After lunch on your own, you may cycle a few more miles, including an optional hill climb into the Meledrio Valley—the gateway to the ski resort Madonna di Campiglio, known as the “Pearl of the Brenta Dolomites.” You will stay in this picturesque corner of Trentino Alto Adige for the next two nights.

Often compared to the toniest of European destinations, Madonna di Campiglio gained fame in the 19th century when Emperor Franz Joseph and his wife Elisabeth (popularly known as “Sissi”) vacationed here. Celebrities still flock here to indulge in its glamorous atmosphere. In summer, outdoor enthusiasts find it the perfect location for hiking, rock climbing, and, of course, biking. Unwind at your family-run, mountain hotel, enjoying the sauna and spa before dinner at the gourmet restaurant. You will savor its homemade dishes and organic selections, such as steelhead trout from the nearby Sarca River, served with apples from the Non Valley.

Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Cogolo to Caldes and Dimaro – 36 km (20 miles)

Afternoon: Dimaro to Costa Rotian – 6 km (4 miles)

What to Expect:

A shuttle takes you to Cogolo in the Pejo Valley this morning. The views are incredible. From here, you will coast downhill on a paved road with little car traffic for a couple of miles. Then you will follow a well-paved bike path along the Noce River to Dimaro and Caldes, mostly downhill or flat. The afternoon route features 6 km (4 miles) of moderate riding up to Costa Rotian, very doable with an e-bike, for magnificent views. Later in the afternoon, a 20-minute shuttle from the bottom of the valley takes you to your hotel in Madonna di Campiglio. Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 8 – 42 km (5 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 4: Waterfalls / Mountain village of Madonna di Campiglio

Awake this morning to the staggering beauty that encircles Madonna di Campiglio and your chalet. After a hearty breakfast prepared by your hosts, set off on a breathtaking day of riding amid the Adamello and Brenta Dolomites. Begin with an inspiring ride in the Rendena Valley, before pausing to visit a local cheesemaker at a family-run farm, the perfect setting for an informal *merenda* (traditional light snack). You'll taste the delicious milk which comes from cows that graze in high mountain pastures during the summer. Later, enjoy lunch on your own. Early this afternoon, continue on your bike into the narrow and dramatic Genova Valley, cut into a canyon between the peaks of the Adamello and Presanella ranges. The Sarca River flows through this astonishingly deep ravine, dropping as it forms several scenic waterfalls. The Nardis Falls are almost close enough to touch as you ride past. Enjoy the ride at your pace, and if you're up for it, add a few harder miles toward the bottom of the valley to see more waterfalls.

Later, shuttle back to Madonna di Campiglio and spend the afternoon as you wish. Board a cable car to one of the peaks for magnificent views and walks through the splendid landscape. Stop for a drink at a *rifugio* or shop in the local boutiques for some of the region's renowned felt objects or sweaters. Tonight, you are treated to regional Trentino specialties at your hotel restaurant.

## Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Carisolo to Bocenago to Maso Pan — 16 km (10 miles)

Afternoon: Maso Pan to Nardis and Carisolo — 13 km (8 miles)

### What to Expect:

This morning, your ride takes you into the quiet Rendena Valley on a paved bike path or country roads.

In the afternoon, you continue into the Genova Valley on a paved road, with a gradual uphill leading to the spectacular Nardis waterfalls. You can skip the gradual hill with a short support vehicle shuttle with your trip leaders. The afternoon option ends with an easy and mostly downhill ride from the waterfalls to Carisolo. From there, all guests shuttle back to Madonna di Campiglio.

Today may offer you an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leaders for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 – 29 km (8 – 18 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

## DAY 5: Sarca River Ride / Picnic / Lake Garda

Today's leg of cycling the Dolomites promises invigorating and beautiful rides along paved roads. Most of the route is downhill as you leave the Dolomites for Lake Garda. Wide-open views of the Presanella and Adamello peaks and the Brenta Dolomites unfold, with their high elevation glaciers and jagged pinnacles. In Carisolo, you will enter the Rendena Valley and pedal along a well-paved bikeway along the banks of the Sarca River. In Stenico, you'll pause for an included picnic lunch hosted at a local osteria, while contemplating from afar the town's imposing castle.

Descending out of Stenico, you begin one of the most spectacular stretches of the week as you follow a path through the Limaro Canyon. This downhill route meanders along the roaring Sarca River and the natural ravine enclosed by the towering rock faces of Monte Casale.

You will end your ride in Sarche and enjoy a well-deserved gelato. A short shuttle takes you to your

elegant hotel in Riva del Garda. After settling in, you have free time to explore the luxurious hotel gardens that stretch to the lakeshore. A short, easy walk on the lake promenade brings you to the heart of Riva, beautifully nestled at the foot of a steep rocky mountain. Dine on your own at the hotel restaurant, or linger in Riva for an array of options.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Carisolo to Stenico — 31 km (19 miles)

Afternoon: Stenico to Sarche — 13 km (8 miles)

#### What to Expect:

A 20-minute shuttle from Madonna di Campiglio this morning takes you to Carisolo in the Rendena Valley, where you'll ride along a beautifully paved bike path to its end in Preore. There, you can opt to shuttle to our lunch spot in Stenico or continue by bike on a scenic, easy-to-moderate route, partly carved into the side of a steep mountain.

The afternoon ride from Stenico down to Sarche is mostly downhill and extremely scenic, including a stretch in the canyon formed by the Sarca River. You will then shuttle from Sarca to your hotel (25 minutes). The last two miles are downhill with some car traffic.

Today may offer an additional independent ride for experienced cyclists. Ask your trip leader for details.

Cumulative Distance Range: 13 – 43 km (8 – 26 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

## **DAY 6: Riva del Garda / Arco / Vino santo tasting / Lake Cavedine / Farewell dinner in a 16th-century manor house**

Mountains surrounding Lake Garda shield the valley from cooler air currents, creating a Mediterranean climate where olive and fruit trees, vineyards, exotic flowers, and even palms all thrive. Your journey culminates in this paradise as you depart directly from your hotel and cycle north on mostly flat terrain to Sarca River Park, where the river spills into Lake Garda. This is one ride where you'll want to stop along the way and take a closer look at some of the different habitats and sights, including the quaint village of

Arco, with its castle looming from a high spur. Take in the stark beauty of the Marocche di Dro habitat, an unexpectedly dry and almost lunar landscape. Pedal through the vineyard-blanketed wine region of Sarche.

Later, arrive at the quiet, verdant shores of intimate Lake Cavedine, where the Pedrotti family has invited you to join them for lunch on their winemaking farm. Enjoy simple specialties such as fragrant tomatoes grown in the Gresta Valley, freshly baked bread, and meats and cheeses from nearby organic farms. Here you'll taste the local *vino santo*, a satisfying rich, sweet "meditation" wine that the Pedrotti family has made the same way for generations. These wines are meant to stand alone, rather than be consumed with food.

After a rewarding lunch, you will loop back to Riva and your hotel. Later this afternoon, you may treat yourself to the luxurious spa and wellness center located in the property's majestic park or go for a swim in Lake Garda. Our farewell dinner is in Riva tonight, hosted in a 1600s manor house.

#### Today's Ride Choices

Morning: Riva to Pedrotti – 28 km (17 miles)

Afternoon: Pedrotti to Riva – 24 km (15 miles)

#### What to Expect:

Today's route is a beautiful loop, half on a well-paved bike path and half on country roads. The morning ride includes a long gradual uphill midway, which can easily be skipped by a short support vehicle shuttle. In the afternoon, you continue on an easy descent to Lake Garda and your hotel.

Cumulative Distance Range: 24 – 52 km (15 – 32 miles)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

## DAY 7: Milan

After breakfast, walk to the ferry embarcadero where you will take a scenic two-hour cruise on Lake Garda to Gargnano. The ferry is scheduled to depart Riva around 9:00 a.m. and arrive at Gargnano before noon. In this picturesque village, there will be time to pick up some lunch or maybe a gelato. Afterward,



together with the Air Package guests, you will depart at 12:00 p.m. by private coach to Milan, arriving at approximately 3:00 p.m.

Your tour ends at our centrally located hotel. From here, a taxi or public transportation can take you to the airport or train station at your own expense.

Included Meals: Breakfast

## Accommodations

May vary depending on departure date.

### Parkhotel Laurin (Days 1-2)

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.

### Hotel Chalet del Sogno (Days 3-4)

The small and intimate Hotel Chalet del Sogno is an air-conditioned, family-run property whose owners are always available. Sogno is Italian for "dream," and you'll surely fall into a blissful reverie during your stay at this charming Madonna di Campiglio lodging. The staff is elegantly dressed in dirndl and lederhosen, typical of the Tyrol area. Large wood-furnished bedrooms offer balconies and breathtaking vistas of the mountains. In the wellness and fitness center, indulge in the indoor swimming pool equipped with countercurrent, two saunas, a steam bath, and more. An expert guide and former Olympic athlete, the owner is available for suggestions and assistance.

### Du Lac et Du Parc Grand Resort (Days 5-6)

The Du Lac et Du Park Grand Resort consists of three air-conditioned buildings set in a 17-acre park planted with large, rare trees and manicured gardens that extend to the shores of Lake Garda. The city center is just a half mile away and accessible via a picturesque lakeside promenade. During your stay, savor the carefully prepared dishes at its two restaurants, one of which provides an intimate and elegant

setting in the heart of the property's gardens. The wellness center, too, is surrounded by delightful paths with fragrant florals. Take advantage of two outdoor swimming pools and one indoor pool; a relaxing way to end your invigorating days on the bike.

## **Hotel Cavour (Day 7)**

Milan's desirable Brera district, with its shops and galleries, is at your doorstep in this ideally located hotel, just minutes away from the metro, Milan Cathedral and La Scala Theater. In the lobby and restaurant, enjoy the vintage design, with furniture and artwork carefully selected to evoke the classic feel of an earlier era. The air-conditioned rooms were entirely refurbished in a more modern style in 2019. Your air-conditioned room features an LCD TV, minibar, and in-room safe. Free WiFi is available throughout the hotel. The hotel's fine restaurant serves light lunches and traditional Milanese dinners.