



Dolomites Hiking (Val Gardena)

September 5-11, 2011

Plan your arrival in Bressanone for September 4

Plan your departure from the Dolomites for September 12

Spend a week hiking in one of the world's most magnificent mountains ranges. Here is an option that puts you in touch with the world-class hiking the Dolomites have to offer but at a more affordable price. On this trip you'll explore the trails and landscapes surrounding the Val Badia and Val Gardena in the western Dolomites. In addition to boasting a spectacular mountain setting these lovely alpine valleys are also a center for Ladin culture! Here, extensive meadowlands, flower-filled villages, and soaring peaks make for a quintessential Dolomites adventure! Revel in the glory of the *Monti Pallidi* ("Pale Mountains") that legend says wear a cloak spun from moonbeams!

Looking for a more luxurious hiking trip in the Dolomites? Perhaps our **Best Hikes in the Dolomites** trip is right for you!

Arrival Day

Arrive today in the town of Bressanone, Italy (also know as Brixen, in German). Bressanone is a lovely, uncrowded South Tyrolean gem set along the Isarco (Eisack) River. Its largely pedestrianized core is reminiscent of Innsbruck, Austria but without the crowds!

Day 1

Overnight in Bressanone

Join your guide for your first hike through quintessential Dolomites landscapes! Discover picture-perfect alpine scenes and mountain hamlets filled with flower-box bedecked houses. Gaze past slender church spires and across lush mountain pastures to the skyscraping mountain ramparts of the Dolomites. Return to Bressanone for the evening.

Day 2

Overnight in the Alta Badia

Breakfast included

After breakfast, travel by vehicle to the village of Colfosco in the upper Badia Valley (Alta Badia). Leave your luggage at the hotel before setting off to explore the trails of the upper Val Badia. You can hike through the Cir group of peaks and into the austere mountain landscapes of the Puez plateau. Or, follow trails that wind through the vast expanse of meadows below Passo Gardena before returning you to Colfosco. You might choose to have a pizza or pasta dinner tonight at one of our favorite Dolomites pizzerias!

Day 3

Overnight in the Alta Badia

Breakfast included

Hike into the lofty, other-worldly landscape of the Sella massif. Ride a cable car to the Belvedere ridge high above the Fassa Valley for stunning views of glacier-clad Marmolada, a peak known as the "Queen of the Dolomites." Another cable car carries you higher to the edge of the Sella plateau from where you follow a trail to the Rifugio Boe in the heart of the Sella.

Day 4

Overnight in the Val Gardena

Breakfast included

Travel from the Val Badia to the Val Gardena. Depart Colfosco via the twisting road over the Gardena Pass. The towering peaks of the Sassolungo (“Long Stone”) stand like sentinels at the upper end of the Val Gardena. The Val Gardena is home to people who speak Ladin (or Ladino) which linguists classify as a Rhaeto-Romance language. Dating from the 5th century, Ladin developed when the Romans invaded the high valleys and the local mountain language mixed with Latin. About 40,000 people consider themselves Ladin. Arrive in Ortisei, largest town in the Val Gardena, and ascend via cable car to the Alpe di Siusi (or Seiser Alm, in German). Two hiking options provide you with an intimate encounter with this superb landscape—one of the most expansive alpine meadowlands in Europe. At the end of the day, arrive at your Val Gardena accommodations where you’ll base for four nights.

Day 5

Overnight in the Val Gardena

Breakfast included

From Ortisei, ascend into the mountains via the Seceda cable car. Hike among the craggy peaks of the mountain group called the Odle Geisler (odle means “needles” in Ladin), and amble through the open meadowlands of the Alpe di Cisles and Mastle Alm. Descend to Santa Cristina via the Col Raiser gondola. Or, undertake the classic Dolomites hike across the Forcella Pana. Ascend via the Rasciesa chairlift to the wide-open meadows of the Rasciesa di Dentro and follow the path to the picturesquely-sited Rifugio Brogles. Follow the exciting, switchbacking path into the heart of the Odle Geisler to the narrow mountain notch known as the Forcella Pana. From here, a spectacular vista of meadow and mountain peak suddenly unfolds!

Day 6

Overnight in the Val Gardena

Breakfast included

Enjoy a delightful hike in the Val Gardena on quiet paths and farm lanes leading through rolling alpine meadows, cool forests and past mountain hamlets. A second hiking option ascends via switchbacks and steps to a less-frequented portion of the mountains where a supremely perched mountain hut offers stunning views over the upper Val Gardena.

Day 7

Overnight in the Val Gardena

Breakfast & dinner included

Get “up close and personal” with the Sassolungo, the distinctive mountain that dominates almost every view from Santa Cristina. Ascend by chairlift to Mont Sëura from where you can follow a trail that leads into the heart of this magnificent mountain massif. Return to the Val Gardena for the evening; enjoy a farewell dinner. Your breakfast tomorrow morning is included.

Other Details about this Trip

Trip Dates: September 5-11, 2011

Price: \$2,685

Single Room for entire trip: \$250

Meeting Point: Hotel in Bressanone (Brixen), Italy on the morning of September 5. You should plan your arrival in Bressanone for September 4. The nearest large international airports are in Munich, Germany and Milan, Italy. Connecting air service is also available to Innsbruck, Austria. Rail service is available from each of these cities to Bressanone.

Departure Point: Trip services end officially in the Val Gardena after dinner on September 11. However, your lodging for that evening and breakfast the following morning are included in the price of the trip. We suggest you plan your departure from Bressanone for some time after 12:00 noon on September 12.

Accommodations: Seven nights in small hotels. All rooms with private bath. Seven breakfasts are included. (Your accommodations in Bressanone on the evening of September 4 are not included in the trip price.)