



Guided walking tour (GGDO)

Lake Garda & the Dolomites

*A complete tour through the world's most beautiful mountains,
Verona, Lake Garda, Trento, Marmolada, Passo Sella,
Val Gardena, Val Badia, Cortina d'Ampezzo & Venice*



TRIP NOTES

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INTRODUCTION

The enormous pinnacles and towers of the majestic Dolomites are the crowning glory of Italy's northern border, and play host to our alpine adventure. A fairytale land where lush meadows nestle against towering limestone peaks, and charming little towns with colourful houses and beautiful lakes, among which is the great Lake Garda, in the valleys. Small family-run hotels and comfortable 'rifugi' (mountain huts) welcome grateful hikers with delectable cuisine, the ubiquitous grappa and steaming cappuccino. Drink in this dramatic limestone setting as you make your way through the different parts of this beautiful mountain range. Because there is not just one 'Dolomites' – on this special tour we show you the distinct ranges, equally beautiful, but all different. You will also immerse yourself in the different cultures: this is Italy, but aside from the Italian culture, the Tyrolean (Austrian) and 'Ladino' cultures are still very evident in the area too.

You start your tour from the charming little town of Garda, on the eastern shore of Lake Garda, still very Mediterranean, a good start for your first easy walks. You'll travel up by cable car to Mt. Baldo, the great mountain range which runs all the way round the lake. Here you make a beautiful roundwalk, with great views over Lake Garda and the valley of the River Adige. Then you settle in at Riva del Garda, still on the same lake, but with a much more alpine character. From here you discover the Brenta Dolomites, a minor, but definitely no less interesting chain. You'll explore the charming little town of Trento, with its wonderfully decorated houses and impressive castle. From here you make a daytrip by cable car, crossing the River Adige onto Monte Bondone, Trento's 'house mountain', with amazing views over the Adige valley, its castles and its vineyards.

From here you then travel to the great glacier of the Marmolada, and explore the Sella range, before settling in at your next base in the Alta Badia valley, the heartland of the 'Ladino' culture. Then you explore different parts of the Fanès-Sennes range, perhaps the prettiest part of the Dolomites. You hike along well-marked paths that lead into majestic mountain scenery. Stroll through alpine meadows carpeted with wildflowers, where by day you soak up the invigorating mountain air on your unforgettable ascent towards alpine bliss. On one night you relax in the warm embrace of your alpine lodging, savouring hearty gourmet cuisine. The last few days you spend in charming Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy's most renowned mountain resort, where you walk to what may be the most beautiful set of peaks in the area, the Tre Cime di Lavaredo. At the end of the walk you descend to Lake Misurina and then back to Cortina again. Here you have a last memorable evening, with a great dinner again. Your trip ends in Cortina the next morning. You have the option of spending a few more days here, and it's also easy to travel down to Venice, either by shuttle bus or by private minibus.

The premises where you'll be staying are all very special, full of historical interest. The standard of the tour is 3/4 stars.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, part of them waymarked. Average walking times: approx. 5 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 0 – Verona

Arrival in Verona in case you arrive a day earlier. In this case you have the chance to explore this beautiful city, whose origins go back to ancient times. For example, you can pay a visit to the famous Roman amphitheatre and see the romantic 'Balcony of Romeo & Juliet'.

N.B. Verona can easily be reached by train. There are regular AV (high speed), Eurostar and Intercity trains from Milan, Venice, Bologna, Florence and Rome. Verona also has an international airport. Several hotels can be booked for you in Verona, according to your wishes (either 'downtown' centrally located, or near the train station, ranging from 3- to 5-star).

Day 1 – (Verona) Garda

The starting point of your tour is the beautiful city of Verona, known above all for the famous balcony from 'Romeo & Juliet'. But its origins go back to Roman times, of which the huge Roman arena is an amazing testimony. Here you will meet your tour leader and fellow travellers at 3pm, and travel by private bus to the charming town of Garda, the 'Pearl of Lake Garda', dominated by its 'Rocca' (rock) with an abbey and the remains of a medieval castle. Here we first settle in at our hotel and then make a relaxed afternoon walk. This walk along the lakeshore brings us onto the peninsula of San Vigilio, written about by the Roman writer Catullus many centuries ago. The atmosphere of this small medieval hamlet is like a fairytale. Here we have our 'aperitivo' and a short introduction on what lies ahead for the next week. We may then wish to spend some time here by the tranquil lake, have a drink, or relax in the park. In the late afternoon we either walk or travel back by bus to Garda. In the evening we go out for dinner together in a nice restaurant which offers the typical regional cuisine.

Accommodation: Garda - Hotel * - Meals included: 1 dinner.**

Total walking: approx. 1,5 h.

Day 2 – Garda & its Rocca & the Peninsula of Sirmione

After a leisurely breakfast we make a wonderful roundwalk, a first test for our hill-walking skills. First we head through the village and buy some picnic supplies, then climb up towards the abbey, a steep but short and pleasant climb, rewarded by beautiful views over the lake. After a visit to the abbey (which also offers very nice chocolate!) we walk around the remains of the medieval town wall onto the 'Rocca', the mountain overlooking Garda and the whole southern part of Lake Garda. This is an ideal place for a picnic with a view. After lunch we descend to Garda again. (For those who want to opt out, there is the chance to wander around the medieval alleys or relax on the beautiful lake front, drink a coffee, have a full lunch here, or simply grab some 'panini' and an ice cream). Then, in the afternoon, we go for a short scenic boat ride across the southern part of the lake to Sirmione. Here we make a nice roundwalk and visit the Roman villa on the beautiful headland. Those who feel like it can also visit the castle. In the late afternoon we travel back by boat to Garda.

Accommodation: Garda - Hotel * - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 picnic lunch.**

Total walking: approx. 3,5 + 1,5 h.

Day 3 – Along Malcesine and the Monte Baldo to Riva del Garda

Today we travel from the southern, 'Mediterranean' shore of Lake Garda, to the northern, 'alpine' side of the lake. We pass many photogenic villages and then stop in the beautiful village of Malcesine, where the great German writer Goethe loved to stay at the castle. We will travel up by cable car, with rotating cabins to assure you 360° views, all the way up to Monte Baldo, the great mountain range which runs all the way round Lake Garda. Here we make a beautiful roundwalk, with great views over Lake Garda and the valley of the River Adige. We will either walk back down to Malcesine or take the cable car again. Then we travel on to our next base at the northernmost point of the lake, in the charming little town of Riva del Garda. We stay in the medieval town centre, with its colourful painted



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houses. Here we notice that we have also passed a 'cultural border', which was also the border between Austria and Italy. After this long day, we enjoy some relaxation at the hotel. In the evening we go for dinner in a nearby restaurant under the medieval arches of Riva, which offers the typical regional cuisine of the Italian lakes region. A drink at the lakeshore square is the perfect end to a beautiful day.

Accommodation: Riva del Garda - Hotel **. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Total walking time: around 4-5 h. Total driving: around 1 h.

Day 4 – Riva del Garda – Lake Molveno - Andalò (Brenta Dolomites)

After breakfast, this morning we travel by private minibus to Molveno, located on a beautiful alpine lake, one of the deepest in the Dolomites, at the foot of the towering Brenta Dolomites, a lesser known part of the range. By cable car we make our way up onto the mountain range, and then enjoy a beautiful, but relatively easy roundwalk, a good introduction to what the Dolomites have to offer! We will have a picnic lunch in the mountains, or we can enjoy some local specialties at a 'rifugio' (mountain hut). After lunch, we make our way back down into the valley, but now we walk down to Andalò, a scenic walk downhill. We have a short stop for a drink here, before our bus picks us up and brings us to the next base, the beautiful city of Trento, the northernmost Italian-speaking city. We settle in at the hotel for some relaxation. Our hotel is centrally located and, therefore, before going for dinner, we are already free to enjoy some time wandering around the historical city centre, with its beautifully painted facades.

Accommodation: Trento - Hotel *. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Total walking time: around 4-5 h. Total driving: around 1,5 h.

Day 5 – Trento & Monte Bondone

After breakfast this morning we walk towards the River Adige, and from here travel up by cable car over the river, onto the 'house mountain' of Trento, Monte Bondone. Although a very short distance away, this area has kept an amazingly quiet, rural atmosphere. We make a beautiful panoramic roundwalk here, with beautiful views over the city of Trento and the River Adige, and a backdrop of the different ranges of the Dolomites! We will have a picnic lunch in the mountains, or, if you want, we can enjoy some local specialties at one of the first 'agriturismos' in Italy. After lunch we make our way back to Trento. Now we have some more time to look around this beautiful little city. Trento is the northernmost Italian-speaking city, on the frontier between Mediterranean and Alpine cultures. And it seems to have taken the best of both worlds! We can enjoy some time wandering around the historical city centre with its beautifully painted facades, or visit one of its great museums. Of course the Castello del Buonconsiglio, where the Council of Trent was held in the 16th century, is definitely worth a visit too, if alone for the famous **Cycle of the Months**, one of the most fascinating secular pictorial cycles of the late Middle Ages. In the evening you go out for dinner together in a nice restaurant which offers the typical regional cuisine.

Accommodation: Trento - Hotel *. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Total walking time: around 4-5 h. Total driving: around 1,5 h.

Day 6 – Mount Marmolada – Sella Dolomites – Val Gardena – Lavilla / Val Badia

After breakfast this morning we travel by private minibus up north, and then penetrate into a landscape dominated by enormous pinnacles that must be seen to be believed – the mighty Dolomites! You first travel up the Adige valley and then into the Val di Fiemme, passing some charming villages along the road. Here we can make a quick coffee stop and buy some supplies for a nice picnic lunch, before travelling on towards one of the most beautiful peaks in the Dolomites, Monte Marmolada. Here we make a great walk, not to the top, but beside Lake Fedaiia and down into the valley of Canazei, with spectacular views of Monte Marmolada. Weather permitting you can also take the lift up to the Marmolada and make a beautiful roundwalk. After our walk we drive to the famous Sella pass and walk down



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into the Gardena valley, one of the prettiest valleys of the massif, and perhaps have a drink in one of the villages along the road. At the end of the afternoon we arrive in the Alta Badia valley, dotted with lovely alpine villages, vibrant meadows and pastures. Our base here is in La Villa. In the evening you can use the sauna, and then enjoy dinner with local specialties at the hotel.

Accommodation: Val Badia - Hotel *. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner.**

Total walking time: around 3-4 h. Total driving time: around 2,5 h.

Day 7 – La Villa – Puez Plateau

After breakfast this morning we walk (optional bus) to the small village of Colfosco, where we start our hike onto the Puez Plateau from. A first stop can be made at a beautifully located mountain hut, overlooking the whole Val Gardena (optional 4WD ride to get here). Then we continue the climb onto the high plain. Here we make a beautiful walk with amazing views towards the mountain hut ('Rifugio' or 'Utia', in local dialect) of Puez. We head along the impressive Ciampani Mountain, partly following the 'Alta Via delle Dolomiti'. Somewhere near the hut (or at the hut itself) we enjoy a (picnic) lunch in the mountains. Then, along the edge of the Vallunga and the Col Dala Soné, we continue our walk on the high plain. You come along the Gherdenaccia pass and then start the descent, with great views of the Fanès–Sennes range in front of you, all the way down to our hotel in La Villa. In the late afternoon you can recover in the sauna to relax from the hard walk, and in the evening there are several options for a nice dinner.

Accommodation: Val Badia - Hotel *. Meals included: 1 breakfast.**

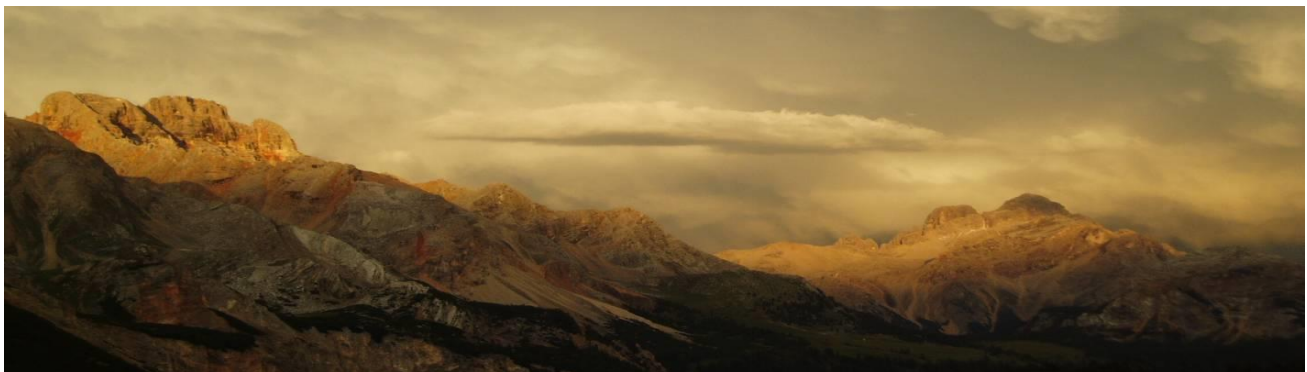
Total walking time: around 5-6 h. Meals included: 1 breakfast.

Day 8 – Val Badia – San Vigilio – Pederù - Fanes Valley

You enjoy breakfast in the hotel to prepare for our hike up into the Fanès-Sennes range. A short scenic drive by private minibus takes us to San Vigilio. Here we have the option of visiting a very interesting museum on the Dolomites. Then we climb up into the valley until we reach the mountain restaurant of Pederù, where we can stop for a quick snack. From here our real hike starts, as we ascend into the mountains, climbing towards the pass of the Fanes Valley, underneath the towering Col de Ru (2076m). From this pass onwards the path flattens out, and it becomes a very scenic easy walk into a quintessential alpine setting – the splendid Fanes valley. We hike around two spectacular alpine lakes, and end the walk at the beautifully located, luxurious mountain hut of Fanes, where we will spend the night.

Accommodation: Fanes - mountain hut *. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner**

Total walking time: around 4-5 h. Total driving time: around 1 h.



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Day 9 – Fanes - Alta Via – Lagazuoi – Cortina d'Ampezzo

After breakfast, today's hike starts from the front door of our hut. This part of your journey sees us entering the real world of the Dolomites with the presence of the great mountains – Cima Scotòni and the Cima Fànès Sud. These mountains are perforated by mazes of operations from World War I (1914-18), bitterly fought in this area. We hike the 'Alta Via' of the Dolomites (also called the 'High Route' Number 1), a long-distance footpath that traverses the Dolomites from north to south. Our route passes through some of the most impressive scenery in the area. At the end of the afternoon we reach the shores of the gentle lake of Lagazuòi and the Rifugio Lagazuoi (2773m), which is awesomely sited with world-class mountain views. Here we can enjoy a drink, before travelling down by cable car into the valley. We will experience one of the world's finest views here: the surrounding valleys disappear into the shadows, highlighting rock pinnacles which – still exposed to sunlight– take on an extraordinary palette of ever-changing colours. Down in the valley our minibus waits to bring us back to Cortina.

Accommodation: Cortina d'Ampezzo - Hotel **. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner.**

Total walking time: around 5-6 h. (several shorter options).

Day 10 – Cortina & the Tre Cime di Lavaredo

After the challenging walks of the last two days, we make an easier walk today. But a splendid one nonetheless, around the Tre Cime ('three peaks') of Lavaredo, one of the most famous postcard images of the Dolomites. A short drive brings us to Lake Misurina, and then up to the Auronzo hut, where our walk starts: along the three mountain peaks of Lavaredo we walk towards the Rifugio Locatelli (Drei Zinnen Hutte). Then we cross to the other side of the mountain chain and enjoy excellent views of the northern face of the Tre Cime. Along a beautiful path we return to the Auronzo hut, where we get the bus back. Now we have the chance to recover and discover the charm of the valley of Cortina d'Ampezzo, a famous resort for the Italian jet set. You could also relax for a bit along the shores of Lake Misurina, before travelling back down to Cortina, or even go for yet another nice hike along the lakeside, in the beautiful and relaxing surroundings. In the evening we can choose where to go for our last great evening meal, a farewell dinner to the Dolomites!

Accommodation: Cortina d'Ampezzo - Hotel **. Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch.**

Total walking time: around 3-4 (+1) h. (several shorter options).

Day 11 – Cortina - Venice

This morning after breakfast, your journey ends. You can opt to spend some more time in the Dolomites, or travel to Venice, which can easily be reached by public transport. A transfer back to Venice can be arranged at any time.



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic hotels, mainly historical buildings (generally 3/4-star; 5-star on some departure dates). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Accommodation is mainly on a **B&B** basis. A number of evening meals are included, for which we have selected the best available restaurants. On three nights you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your guide can give you good tips for these evening dinners.

Almost all (picnic) lunches are included in the tour price. On other days you are free to have your own lunch. Here you have the option of having your lunch in a nice restaurant, or purchasing your supplies for a picnic lunch.

Nights 1 & 2: The first two nights are spent in the charming lakeside village of Garda, the village that lends its name to the wider area. Your accommodation is a good 3-star hotel in the heart of the historical centre.

Night 3 : This night is spent in a charming 4-star hotel, located right in the heart of Riva del Garda. A wonderful location, at walking distance from all main monuments and the lakeshore.

Night 4 & 5 : These two nights are spent in a good 3-star hotel, located in the centre of Trento, at walking distance from all main monuments and the river.

Nights 6 & 7: These two nights are spent in a charming 3-star hotel in the heart of the Val Badia, renowned for its special 'Ladino' kitchen and with a beautiful wellness centre.

Night 8: This night is spent in a wonderful 'Rifugio'. Rather than just a 'mountain hut', this is a good 3-star hotel, again with a good kitchen, in a wonderful setting on the high plain of Fanes.

Nights 9 & 10: The last two nights you stay in the romantic & fashionable village of Cortina d'Ampezzo, capital of the Italian Dolomites. You'll stay in a beautiful, family-run 4-star hotel. The friendly staff will make you feel at home.

INCLUDED

- Private English-speaking tour leader for 11 days
- Accommodation: 2 nights Garda, 1 night Riva del Garda, 2 nights Trento, 2 nights Val Badia, 1 night Rifugio Fanes, 2 nights Cortina d'Ampezzo, all in good ***/**** hotels (1 night 3-star level 'mountain hut')
- Meals: all breakfasts, 7 dinners (good restaurants!), 3 lunches
- All private & public transfers as indicated throughout the entire itinerary
- Entrance fees of all sites along the itinerary
- All special activities as outlined in the day-by-day itinerary
- Guest experts for special places
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport
- All gratuities for baggage, porters & hotel service



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NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips

LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2/3): Mostly moderately easy walks along well-maintained footpaths, with rough surfaces nonetheless. On some days some stretches are difficult for those suffering from vertigo (but NOT dangerous!). On these days alternative options are available. Extensions or shortcuts are also possible on most days.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in VERONA (train station), a city with an international airport, and connected with Venice, Milan & Rome (and all other major Italian cities) by a frequent (high speed) train service. From the airport there are regular shuttle buses to the train station.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in CORTINA D'AMPEZZO on day 11. A short transfer brings you to the train or bus station (included), where you travel back by bus or train to Venice. Several taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

TOUR VARIATIONS

EXTRA NIGHTS

It is possible to include some extra nights before or after your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'. For those who have never been to Verona an extra day here is strongly recommended.

The tour can easily be extended with a few days in Cortina d'Ampezzo.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is the opportunity to visit Venice. The tour can also easily be extended with a few days here. Several good accommodations are available. Details and prices on request.

BESPOKE ADVENTURES

Many of these tours can be turned into Private 'Bespoke Adventures' to accommodate private group travel.

We can organize both "off the shelf" itineraries, as well as create custom itineraries to meet your special needs. Book the dates you want, with the family or friends you wish to bring along! Longer and shorter versions of this tour are also available. Prices on request.

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