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Dossier: Dolomites/Guided/Hotels/11 days/2020

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Dolomites Traverse / Guided: 11 days / Sept 2020

Trip starts: Day 1 at Venice Marco Polo Airport

Trip ends: Day 11 at Venice Marco Polo Airport

Salamander Adventures have put together an west to east traverse across the Dolomites that loosely follows the quiet Alta Via 9 (AV9), taking in the most spectacular scenery in this UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The route visits the famous towns of Campitello, Corvara and Cortina. We hike through some magnificent landscapes and see mountains such as the Catinaccio (Rosengarten), the Marmolada (the highest peak in the Dolomites) and stand at the base of the iconic Tre Cime di Lavaredo. The region has a complex history and you will see *via ferratas* and bunkers from the First World War.

Beginning our trek in Alpe di Siusi, 25 km north east of Bolzano, we head east crossing passes, hiking along ridges and making good use of the cable cars to gain altitude. We cover around 130km / 81 miles and make some big ascents and descents.

We stay at 3-star hotels for seven nights and spend three nights at carefully chosen, family-run, privately owned Italian rifugios (mountain refuge / hut). We have chosen to include most of your meals when on the trek as we have found it is simpler for you and often costs less overall. There is a rest day in Cortina d'Ampezzo on day seven. Your main luggage is transferred from hotel to hotel.

This trek will suit people who have comfortably completed the TMB or equivalent and who enjoy a journey with impressive mountain views. The Dolomites Traverse is a bit tougher than the TMB with some longer days. You should be happy covering 15-21km (10-14 miles) each day, with a number of ascents and descents. This is a challenging trek and you should be confident of your fitness.

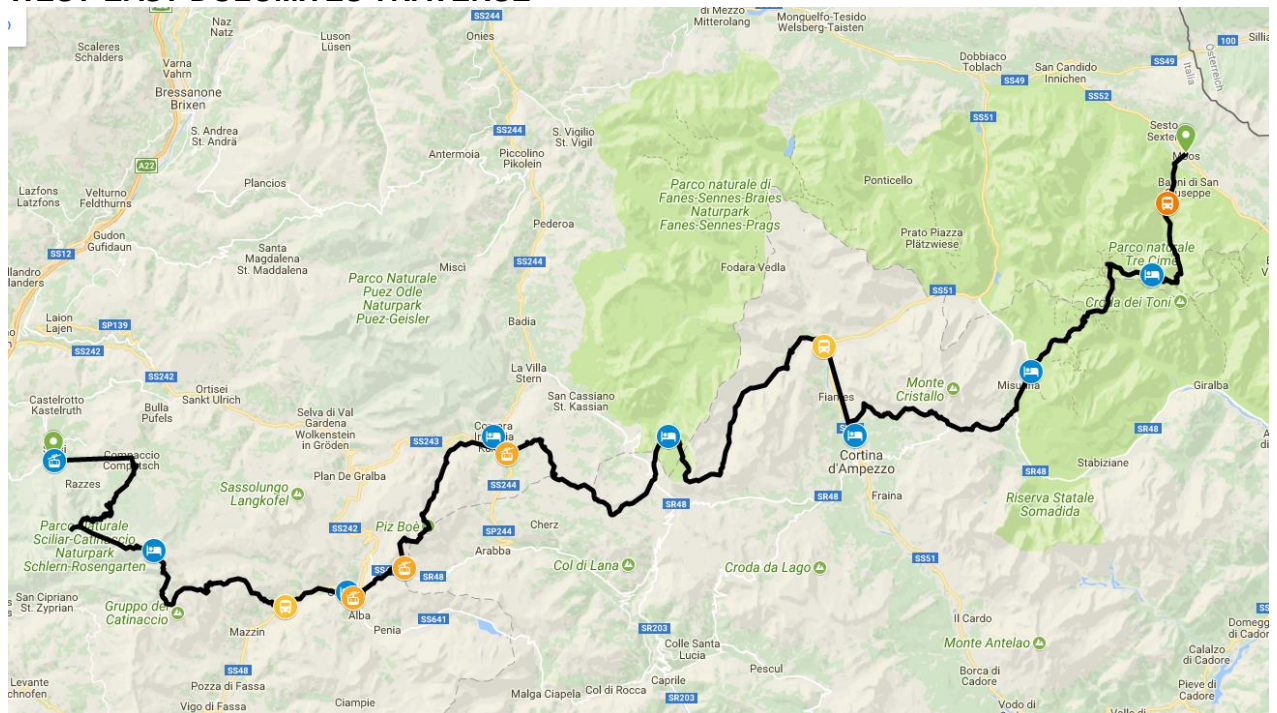


The walking will be mostly on well-maintained trails, though it is likely that we will encounter some rougher ground. Some ascents will be challenging and you should be confident of climbing 800-1200m, but we make good use of the cable cars to gain height quickly, allowing us to hike in the high Dolomites. There are five days with descents of 1000-1500+ metres.

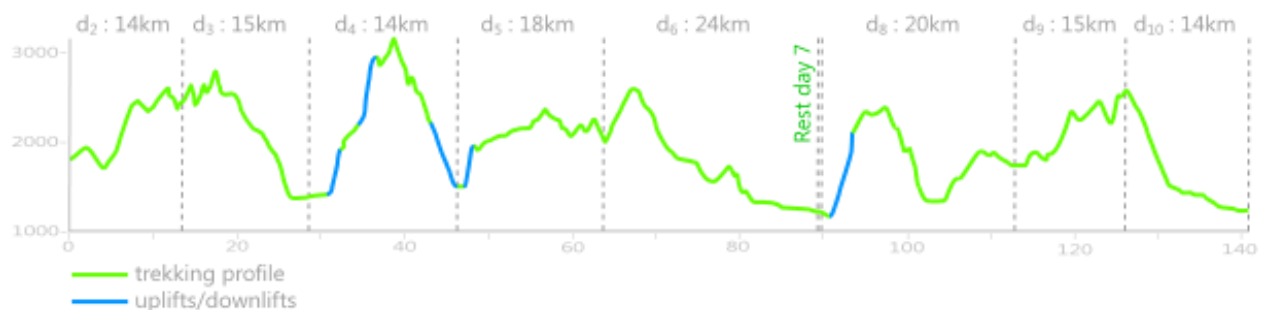
The trip will be led by an experienced and fully qualified International Mountain Leader (IML).

Our route follows quieter trails and stays at carefully picked accommodation throughout. There are sections, however, where we will be with larger numbers of hikers: notably at Lagazuoi, Misurina and the Tre Cime.

WEST-EAST DOLOMITES TRAVERSE



PROFILE



ITINERARY: DOLOMITES TRAVERSE

Day 1 Meet at Venice Marco Polo Airport: transfer to Alpe di Siusi (1850m)

Meet at Venice Marco Polo Airport at 13:00hrs (1pm). We will then transfer you by road to our hotel in Alpe di Siusi - the trip takes 3.5hrs - 4hrs. Alpe di Siusi is vast meadow area at an altitude of 1850m and Europe's largest mountain plateau at 55km²: the views are spectacular. We stay in a hotel located in the centre of Compaccio village.

Hotel. Meals included: dinner

Day 2 Trek from Alpe di Siusi to Rifugio Alpe di Tires (2440m)

After breakfast we walk from the hotel (1850m) and head south through the Alpine meadows, with views of the magnificent limestone peaks of the Catinaccio (Rosengarten) mountain range. We then make a steep ascent which brings us to 2500m with panoramic views looking south and east.

Tonight we spend our first night in a rifugio (mountain refuge). This contemporary, family-owned, private rifugio is simple and stylish with all mod-cons including hot showers. You will stay in a small, comfortable dorm (2-5 beds) with fresh, clean bed linen. You will dine in a beautiful pine-clad restaurant with panoramic mountain views.

You will not have access to your luggage tonight so you need to pack appropriately. Hiking time is approximately 5.5 hours. 14km.

Ascent 700m, Descent 500m.

Refuge. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 3 Trek to Campitello via the Catinaccio range

From the rifugio we head east and follow the magnificent ridge walk called the Sentiero Federico Augusto. There are excellent views of the Sasso Piato mountain, Catinaccio range and the Seiser Alm plateau. We'll stop at a rifugio for lunch and a well-earned apple strudel. We then descend to the town of Campitello (1450m) with a few bars and restaurants.

You will have your main luggage tonight.

Hiking time is approximately 7.5 hours. 15km.

Ascent 350m, Descent 1300m.

Hotel. Meals included: breakfast & dinner

Day 4 Hiking in the shadow of the Sella Group

We take the Col Rodela lift which gains almost 1000m in height in a matter of minutes. The magnificent Sella Group of mountains dominate the view and the sheer cliffs look like a giant fortress. We hike in a clockwise direction, around the massif, through meadows nestled between the Sassolungo and Sella Group. At the Passo Gardena we descend to Corvara (1,568m).

You will have your main luggage tonight.



Hiking time is approximately 7.5 hours. 17km.
Ascent 750m, Descent 900m

Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 5 Trek from Corvara to Utia Scotoni

We take a short lift up to 2000m and then hike along a beautiful undulating ridge for 7km to Passo di Valparola (2192m).

From here we hike up a steep path to 2260m and then descend to the refuge (1985m) nestled beneath some huge cliffs. This is a very special place and the area feels wild and remote.

Our second rifugio (mountain refuge) is a traditional Alpine-style chalet with a cosy restaurant and a seating area facing the sun. Run by Manuela and her family, it is a privately rifugio with just 32 beds. There are hot showers and you will stay in a small comfortable dorm (4-5 beds) with fresh, clean bed linen and towels. Currently the family have their own pet alpacas in the garden.

You will not have access to your luggage tonight so you need to pack appropriately.
Hiking time is approximately 5-6 hours. 18km.

Ascent 920m, Descent 880m (Total ascent 1400m, including the lift.)

Refuge. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 6 Lagazuoi, Col de Bos and Cortina

We make a short, steep ascent beneath vast limestone cliffs and on to the Monte de Lagazuoi. During the First World War this region witnessed the first vertical war in history. There are interesting remnants from the War and you can see the galleries and trenches cut out of the limestone cliffs. We cross the Forc Col de Bos and skirt under the cliffs of Tofana de Rozes. This is a long but rewarding day with outstanding scenery. We arrive into Cortina d'Ampezzo (1200m) in the late afternoon.

You will have your main luggage tonight.
Hiking time is approximately 7 hours. 16km.
Ascent 800m, Descent 1300m.

Hotel. Meals included: breakfast

Day 7 Rest day in Cortina

Today is a rest day. Cortina is the premier ski resort in Italy often frequented by Europe's jet-set crowd. It is a pretty town located in a valley surrounded by mountains with the Boite River running through it. You are free to explore this upmarket town with its swanky shops, cafés and restaurants. There are a couple of small museums focusing on modern art, the Great War and Paleontology. You can also make an excursion by public bus to visit the tunnel system made during the First World War.

Hotel. Meals included: breakfast



Day 8 High traverse to Lake Misurina

We continue our journey by first taking a cable car to 2123m and traversing under vast cliffs with a few small, easy sections of fixed equipment. On our way, we pass by Lago di Sorapis – a beautiful turquoise lake. We then continue into a forest and make our way to the spectacularly located Lake Misurina (1754m), with a back drop of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo in the distance. Our hotel is located on the lake shores. There are a couple of small shops nearby.

You will have your main luggage tonight.

Hiking time is approximately 6 hours. 20km.

Ascent 950m, Descent 1450m (Total ascent 1700m, including the lift).

Hotel. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 9 Trek to Tre Cime di Lavaredo and on to Pian di Cengia

From the lake shore we head towards the Tre Cime passing by the famous Rifugio Auronzo (2320m). We head clockwise around the Tre Cime and are finally able to see the imposing north faces: still regarded as some of the toughest mountaineering routes in Europe. We then continue through the spectacular scenery to the Pian di Cengia (2522m).

Our third rifugio (mountain refuge) is located high in the mountains giving access to some great trekking routes. It is a little more basic than the other two rifugios we have already stayed at. A sheet sleeping bag is required for this night.

You will not have access to your luggage tonight so you need to pack appropriately.

Hiking time is approximately 6-7 hours. 15km.

Ascent 1280m. Descent 500m.

Refuge. Meals included: breakfast, lunch & dinner

Day 10 Trek to Dobbiaco

Our final day's trek allows us to savour the magnificent surroundings of this unique mountain range. We make our way through the high cliffs and peaks to the road-head at Moso. Today's walk is a fitting end to our journey. We take a short bus ride to Dobbiaco (1210m) for our final night.

You will have your main luggage tonight.

Hiking time is approximately 5 hours. 14km.

Ascent 200m, Descent 1100m.

Hotel. Meals included: breakfast & dinner

Day 11 Transfer to Venice Marco Polo Airport

After breakfast we transfer in 3 hours to Venice Marco Polo Airport by private mini bus. We aim to arrive by 13:00hrs (1pm). Trip ends.

Meals included: breakfast



Extending your stay in Italy

You may like to explore Venice which can be easily reached by water taxi or bus from the airport. We recommend you book a hotel via a hotel booking website, such as booking.com , where you will find competitive rates.

While our intention is to adhere to the day-by-day route as printed above, a degree of flexibility is built into the itinerary. Overnight stops may vary from those suggested. Occasionally, it may not be possible to follow the itinerary as planned. This may be for a variety of reasons – climatic, political, physical or other. In these circumstances we will make the best alternative arrangements possible that maintains the integrity of the original itinerary.



PRACTICAL INFORMATION

Is it for me?

The route is approximately 130km/81 miles. This trip should appeal to you if you regularly take walking weekends and are happy covering 15-21km (10-14 miles) each day, with a number of ascents and descents over varying terrain. On this trek in the Dolomites we normally walk for between 6 and 8 hours each day and be outdoors for 8 or 9 hours.

We generally follow good, well-maintained paths though there are sections when it is rocky underfoot. On some short sections, we will encounter fixed equipment, such as cables for hand lines and short ladders. These are normal in the Dolomites and our route only follows established hiking trails. Please note that we do not follow the *via ferratas* or scrambling routes which are a step-up from hiking and require specialist equipment.

The highest altitude we walk to is around 2600 metres, so you should not feel the altitude apart from a little shortness of breath. In late June and early July we may encounter patches of snow, particularly at the mountain passes, and may have to kick steps to make the path secure.

Group size

- Minimum 6, maximum 14.

Price and what it includes

- Accommodation on a twin-share basis at all hotels.
- Three nights at comfortable refuges in small dormitories.
- Transfers to and from Venice Marco Polo airport.
- All transfers and five cable cars when part of the organised trek.
- 10 breakfasts, 5 picnic lunches and 8 dinners.
- Luggage transfers so that you have your main luggage for 7 of the 10 nights.
- The trek is led by a qualified International Mountain Leader (IML).

What is not included

- Dinner in Cortina (day 7 & 8).
- Three lunches when trekking (day 3, 6, 10). For the days when lunch is not included it can be bought at a refuge. Lunch is not included on airport days.

Accommodation and meals

We stay in 3-star hotels for 7 nights and at comfortable refuges for 3 nights.

Rooms at the hotels are on a twin-share basis: all have attached private bathrooms. All have a restaurant and many have wellness centres which can include steam rooms, saunas, Jacuzzis and small swimming pools. At some hotels the spa is included in your stay, at others you have to pay extra: €10 - €25. In addition, some spas accept swimming costumes, in others you are expected only to wear a towel.



For the nights at the mountain refuges, we reserve small dormitories. The refuges have been carefully chosen and we stay at them to enhance the trip. The remote locations allow us to get deep amongst the mountains and take the best route.

The first two refuges are very different from what most people perceive or have previously experienced as 'just a night in a hut'. The refuges are privately owned, personal and offer facilities that are much better than one might expect. There is clean, fresh bedding, hot showers along the corridor and they offer small dorms. There is no need to carry sleeping bags. This contrasts with the big and often run-down refugios owned by the Club Alpina Italiano where the linen is changed every 3 days, the dorms have 30+ beds and they are terribly busy – as seen on the Alta Via 1.

Our third refuge has fewer comforts and is run more like a traditional refuge, but we have deliberately chosen it because it is small and is privately owned. At this last refuge we will have a bigger dorm and you are required to bring a light-weight sheet sleeping bag or silk liner. However, its location amongst the giant pale limestone mountains and friendliness of the owners makes this a very worthwhile experience.

Towels are provided and you can take showers at the first two refuges. You need to bring your own lightweight towel for third refuge where they have basic washing facilities.

Included dinners are normally a set 3-course meal and are eaten in the hotel and refuges' restaurant area. Tea and coffee at dinner and all other drinks are not included.

Please note that, as elsewhere in Italy, all restaurants expect you to buy mineral water. They do not provide tap water.

Typical meals at the hotels

Breakfast: tea, coffee, juice, cereals, bread, butter, jam, cheese, ham, salami, yoghurt.

Dinner: starter and/or salad bar, main course, dessert. Often there is choice of main course in the hotels.

The hotels sell soft drinks, beer, wine, mineral water, coffee etc.

The hotels offer meals for vegetarian diets. Most of the hotels try very hard to cater to vegan and gluten-free diets, although we cannot guarantee this. If your diet is restricted we suggest you bring supplementary foods with you.

You must advise us at the time of booking of any dietary requirements.

Typical meals at the refuges

There will be a 3-course set menu with vegetarian options. The food is often very good.

The refuges sell soft drinks, beer, wine, mineral water, cakes and a variety of chocolate bars.

Lunches

We will provide a picnic lunch for 5 days when the Guide is able to shop at a supermarket. For the 3 lunches after we have stayed at the refuges we suggest you



get a picnic made up by the refuge or we will stop at lunchtime at another refuge on the trail. Here you can order other items such as soup, pasta or risotto dishes, meat dishes and plenty of tasty cakes!

If you chose not to take or eat any of the meals provided throughout this trip, there is no refund.

Luggage transfers

You will have access to your main luggage for 7 of the 10 nights. This will be at the towns when we stay at hotels.

On the days you do not have access to your luggage (three nights in total) you will need to carry your over-night gear, which will most likely include spare socks, underwear, T-shirt and basic toiletries. This is light back-packing and we recommend you have a 40 litre rucksac – and no smaller than 35 litres. Please note that this happens on three separate occasions and so you only need to pack for one night. For the third refuge, you need to bring a sheet sleeping bag.

Please restrict the weight of your main luggage to a single 20kg bag. Sports bags and suitcases are fine.

We strongly recommend that you do not leave any valuables or any object of high value in your main luggage. When your luggage is transferred and then delivered to the next hotel, it is likely that it will be left in the reception area or in an unattended back-room. We recommend that you lock your luggage and clearly label it with your name, address and mobile phone number.

Airport transfers

We arrange an airport pick-up from Venice Marco Polo International Airport on Day 1. Please inform us in advance of your flight number and arrival time. Please let us know if you are extending your stay in Italy either at the beginning or end of the trip.

The joining point is in the Arrivals Hall at Venice Marco Polo at 13:00hrs (1pm).

If you miss your pre-arranged transfer you should call us for information on how to get to the start of the trek: any costs incurred will be your responsibility. Please note that it is 4 hours by minibus to Alpe di Siusi: a taxi would be prohibitively expensive. You would need to transfer by public bus and/or train via Bolzano.

You are welcome to arrange your own transport to the hotel in Alpe di Siusi, at your own expense.

We arrange a drop-off at Venice Marco Polo International Airport on Day 11. This will be by 13:00hrs (1pm). Most airlines will require a 2-hour check in. If you need to be at the airport earlier, you will need to make your own arrangements.



Transport during the tour

All transfers to the walks are included in the price of the tour: we use a mix of private and public transport.

The transfer from the airport is in a minibus and takes 3.5 – 4 hours. The transfer at the end of the trip to the airport takes 3 hours

We take short public buses which are between 5 and 30 minutes.

We intend to make good use of cable cars to gain or lose altitude on some days.

These are included in the cost.

Staff

Throughout the trip, you will be accompanied by a qualified International Mountain Leader who has a First Aid certificate and carries a First Aid Kit.

Weather

In the summer, daytime temperatures can vary from 15-30°C in the valleys to 0-25°C at higher altitudes (at the cols and ridges it can be cold and windy). It all depends on whether the sun is out and it can often feel very hot: occasionally it reaches 35°C in the valley and can feel quite muggy in the late afternoon. At night the temperature is 5-15°C in the valley and can drop close to 0-5°C at the night stops at the refuges. However, inside the refuges it will be warm.

As with all mountain ranges it can rain – either as frontal weather or as thunder storms after a hot day – and you should come prepared for this. It can be cold and windy at higher elevations and snow is not unknown. We pay special attention to the local weather forecasts and will adjust the day-to-day itinerary if we feel it is necessary to get the best from your tour.

Clothing and equipment

- Good walking boots: leather or fabric and should be worn-in before you arrive.
- Full set of good-quality waterproofs – jacket and trousers. Gore-Tex is recommended: a 'pac-a-mac' is not good enough.
- Trousers or skirts, short trousers.
- Swimming costumes for the wellness centres at hotels.
- T-shirts and tops that includes a jumper or fleece jacket.
- Rucsac that will give you enough room to carry a few clothes plus other items for the overnight periods when you do not have access to your main luggage: 40 litres is recommended – and no smaller than 35 litres.
- Sun hat, sun cream, sunglasses, water bottle, warm woolly hat and gloves.
- Torch, blister kit, any personal medicine.
- Small lightweight towel for night 9.
- Sheet sleeping bag or silk liner for night 9.

For the night stops when you will not have access to your main luggage we recommend you carry a change of underwear, socks and T-shirt, basic toiletries and a torch – please remember that you will have to carry it all. You will need to carry your picnic lunch and will probably have your camera and blister kit with you.



Although it may be cold outside at night, it will be warm inside and so down jackets are not needed. However, if you intend to do a bit of star-gazing at the refuges a small, lightweight down gillet or jacket might be welcome.

Extra expenses & money

There are ATMs in most of the towns. Italy is part of the Euro Zone - so you'll need Euros. You can use credit cards in most places, though Amex seems to get commonly refused. When trekking, euros cash are accepted everywhere.

You will need extra money for drinks, lunches and evening meals when not included. In addition, postcards, souvenirs, snacks you might buy at mountain refuges or cafés and any optional activities. Most towns have cafés, map shops and outdoor stores with a small range of equipment.

Typical costs

These are approximate costs: you can spend more or less than indicated.

Dinners	Allow €25-30 per meal for the two dinners in Cortina.
Lunch	You need to buy three lunches when on trek. Allow €10-20 depending on how much you order.
Misc	Wine (€10-15), beer (€3-5), soft drinks (€2-3), cakes & snacks, coffee.

Passports, visas and insurance

It is essential that you are in possession of an up to date and valid passport. You must check the visa and entry requirements of your chosen destination and any countries that you may be stopping off at en-route. Whilst we are able to offer general advice to British citizens, personal circumstances such as criminal records, may affect your eligibility to enter certain countries. It is therefore your responsibility to ensure that you have the correct documentation to gain entry into your chosen destination(s). For any further information, please consult the relevant embassy or for British residents visit: www.fco.gov.uk

Adequate and valid travel insurance is compulsory when you travel with us and it is a condition of accepting your booking that you agree you will have obtained adequate and valid travel insurance for your booking by the date of departure. We recommend that you take out insurance as soon as your booking is confirmed.

We recommend that your travel insurance includes repatriation, that you are covered for trekking in the Italian Dolomites up to 3252 metres, helicopter rescue, all the activities mentioned in this dossier and any optional activities you may take part in. You must check with your insurer that you have adequate and valid cover for your tour. Anyone who does not have insurance will not be allowed to take part in the tour until cover is arranged. This is part of our booking conditions.

Please ensure that you have an up-to-date copy of this dossier immediately before you travel, as from time to time our itineraries may be amended, either for operational reasons or in response to feedback from clients. You will be informed of any major changes to your trip but small changes may just be added to this dossier.

