

Italy: The Dolomites

Tour-Only Itinerary

To dive deep into Italy's majestic Dolomites, there's no substitute for the local insight from Country Walkers leaders. As you hike among the soaring massifs of northern Italy, you'll appreciate their expert mountaineering skills as they bring you an insider's view of the Dolomite's geological composition and rich alpine culture. Revel in stunning views of Marmolada and Cinque Torri—and hike the incredible Sass De Putia circuit, passing charming Ladin cabins and summer hay huts. Through it all, you'll experience warm Italian hospitality at traditional hotels where the owners have been Country Walkers friends for decades—welcoming you as part of the family. Here, you'll discover remarkable local wines, rich alpine cuisine, and the unique mountain ambiance that sets the Dolomites region towering above the rest.



Highlights

- Tour the remains of World War I bunkers and tunnels, learning about the area's fascinating history with your knowledgeable leaders.
- Marvel at the dramatic Odle peaks from Seceda's panoramic ridgeline—taking in sweeping views of this UNESCO World Heritage site from a historic alpine hut.
- Enjoy authentic South Tyrolean hospitality, personalized attention, and a deep connection to traditional Ladin culture during a stay with the Cristofolini family—gracious hosts of a unique historic hotel in the heart of the Dolomites.
- Follow a path of gradual switchbacks carpeted with junipers to Limo Pass, where Lake Limo sits within a natural amphitheater, surrounded by wind-carved karst formations.

- Spend three nights in chic Cortina d'Ampezzo and discover the reason this unique town has a 1,000-year history as a tourist destination.

On all Fully-Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Air Packages include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This Guided Walking Adventure is rated moderate to challenging, with an average of 5 to 7 hours (5–7 Alpine miles) of hiking per day and limited route options. It is best suited for those seeking a true hiking experience rather than a leisurely walk. Daily hikes include significant ascents and descents ranging from approximately 1,100 to 2,800 feet. The highest walking elevation begins at roughly 8,000 feet and is accessed by cable car. Trails vary from well-worn paths and gravel roads to rocky stream crossings, with

footing that ranges from packed dirt to loose gravel, uneven rocks, and steep steps—some with slippery roots, especially when wet. The hiking pace is steady yet comfortable, with most days involving full-time trail activity and 30-minute to one-hour transfers. On select days, guests may opt for a half-day walk by using a cable car, gondola, or shuttle to shorten the route and instead explore the towns of San Vigilio di Marebbe or Cortina.

DAY 1

Your Country Walkers Vacation Begins

Mount Plose; 4-6-mile options, easy to moderate

Your Country Walkers trip leaders will meet you at 10:00 a.m. in the lobby of your first hotel, the Adler Historic Guesthouse, in the charming medieval town of Bressanone (as it's known in Italian; *Brixen* in German). They will be wearing Country Walkers shirts for easy identification. Please arrive dressed for walking and prepared for the day's hike.

Bressanone is located just 28 miles south of the Brenner Pass, the border between Italy and Austria. This historic town lies in South Tyrol—the bilingual region encompassing Trentino and Alto Adige—which belonged to Austria until 1918. Today, German is still more commonly spoken than Italian. Known as the “Ancient Bishop’s City,” Bressanone is nestled between two rivers and framed by mountains that slope into vineyards and lush orchards. Its Old Town invites exploration with its cobbled lanes, pastel-colored houses, and graceful bridges and buildings.

Following a brief orientation, set out for a hike at the neighboring Mount Plose ski area. A scenic 10-minute gondola ride whisks you high above Bressanone and the Isarco Valley to the start of your loop walk at an altitude of 6,700 feet. You follow a well-maintained panoramic trail with sweeping views of the Odle peaks—tomorrow’s hiking destination—and continue to a welcoming alpine lodge restaurant for a light lunch. If you wish, you can continue hiking further along the ridgeline before returning to the gondola for the ride back down the mountain. (In case of inclement weather, an alternate walk of equivalent distance is offered along the Chestnut Trail from Velturto to the Abbey of Sabiona and the town of Chiusa.)

This evening, gather at a nearby restaurant for an *aperitivo* featuring Alto Adige wines, regional *speck*, and local cheeses. Then sit down to a delicious dinner of South Tyrolean cuisine—perhaps a first course

of handmade spinach-filled ravioli, followed by a *secondo piatto* of river trout, local game, or lamb. Toast the start of your alpine adventure with a crisp local white wine, and end the evening with a sweet taste of the region's famous apple strudel.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Parco Naturale Puez-Odle: Val di Funes and Seceda

5 miles, moderate to challenging, 555-ft. elevation gain and 1,650-ft. elevation loss or 7 miles, moderate to challenging, 555-ft. elevation and 2,820-ft. elevation loss/gain

You awaken to a generous breakfast buffet in your hotel's warm, wood-beamed dining room, featuring eggs to order, cheeses, *speck*, an assortment of yogurts, cereals, juices, pastries, fruit, and, of course, cappuccino! After breakfast, check out of your hotel and board your private coach for a 40-minute drive to the pretty village of Ortisei in Val Gardena. From here, take a gondola to Seceda (elevation: 8,200 feet), where you're greeted with one of the most stunning views in the Dolomites—a 360-degree panorama encompassing numerous Dolomitic mountain groups: Sella, Marmolada, Pale di San Martino, Sassolungo-Sassopiatto, Alpe di Siusi, Sciliar, Catinaccio, Plose, Pütia, Odle-Puez, and even the Austrian Alps.

The Parco Naturale Puez-Odle, a UNESCO World Heritage site covering 10,200 hectares, is renowned for its geological richness and fascinating rock formations. Today's invigorating hike offers dramatic views of the jagged Odle peaks, which resemble castle battlements. You begin along the Seceda ridgeline, overlooking the Funes Valley, and pass wooden huts scattered across mountain pastures as you enter the nature park. One such hut, Rifugio Pieralongia, offers refreshments and snacks—perfect for a brief rest. Nearby, marvel at the dramatic Pieralongia rock spire before descending to Rifugio Firenze (6,685 feet), one of the earliest mountain huts in Val Gardena, built in 1888. Here, enjoy a well-deserved lunch with breathtaking views of the Sassolungo and Odle mountains. Perhaps try a refreshing *radler* (beer and lemonade) alongside traditional Ladin specialties like pasta, soup, or polenta.

The ancient Ladin culture, which developed in these isolated valleys during Roman times, continues to thrive here. In summer, many Ladin families return to their mountain cabins to relax, picnic, hay, and practice traditional wood carving.

After lunch, bid farewell to your hosts and begin a gentle uphill walk to Col Raiser (6,900 feet). From here, you may choose to descend to Santa Cristina Valgardena via gondola, or continue on foot for an additional two miles. This longer route begins with a steep dirt path that transitions into the wide gravel Sentiero degli Scoiattoli (“Trail of the Squirrels”), winding through forest with views of the Sella and Sassolungo-Sassopiatto massifs.

From Santa Cristina, a 75-minute drive brings you to your home for the next two nights: the idyllic mountain village of San Vigilio di Marebbe. Here, you’re warmly welcomed by the family that has run their elegant Art Nouveau hotel for generations. Nestled in a ring of mountains, the hotel’s garden is the perfect spot to enjoy a cocktail while experiencing the *enrosadira*—the pink sunset glow that illuminates the peaks as the sun’s last rays strike the white dolomitic limestone. Later, savor a chef-prepared dinner of locally raised meats, fresh vegetables, and garden herbs in the hotel’s dining room.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 3

Parco Naturale Puez-Odle: Sass de Pütia

7 miles, moderate, with a one-hour challenging uphill section, 1,300-ft. elevation gain and 2,460-ft. elevation loss

A sumptuous breakfast buffet fuels you for today’s walk. The route follows the Sass de Pütia loop, beginning on a wide gravel path bordered by heather and bilberry. The trail ascends gently past summer hay huts and small mountain cabins called baite, used by the local Ladin people. As you continue through open meadows, the path narrows and skirts the mountain. Here you’ll face the day’s greatest challenge: a 900-foot ascent over the course of about an hour. The trail zigzags steeply upward around large boulders, a trickling stream, and fields of Rhaetian poppies, with steps and timber traverses marking the final push. At the top of the saddle—Pütia Fork, at roughly 7,700 feet—the panoramic reward is well worth the effort. From this high perch, take in sweeping views of rolling pastureland thick with yellow buttercups, gentians, pink mountain thrift, and a horizon that includes the Puez group, Conturines group with Sasso della Santa Croce, the Fanes range with Lagazuoi, and distant glimpses of Pelmo.

Rounding Sass de Pütia, the trail merges with the famous Alta Via 2—one of eight long-distance hiking routes in the Dolomites known as Alte Vie, or “high paths.” These multi-day trails are supported by a

network of *rifugi* (alpine huts). For the next mile or so, you enjoy a level trail flanked by green pastures and grazing cows, with views extending across the Puez, Fanes, and Conturines groups, the Odle, and even Civetta in the distance.

Soon, you arrive at your lunch stop. Refuel with a satisfying meal of local specialties—perhaps a hearty bowl of pasta, soup, or polenta—while soaking in the views. After lunch, descend through sloping pastureland to a charming valley dotted with water mills—an open-air museum of sorts, complete with wooden sculptures. Along the way, wildflowers abound and raptors may be spotted soaring overhead.

A short drive returns you to San Vigilio di Marebbe, where there's time to relax, stroll through town, or schedule an Ayurvedic massage at your own expense before gathering for dinner in the hotel's dining room.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 4

Parco Naturale Puez-Odle: Colfosco and Altipiano de Crespeina. Travel to Cortina d'Ampezzo

5 miles, moderate, 1,280-ft. elevation gain and 1,935-ft. elevation loss

Departing San Vigilio after breakfast, you head south on a scenic 30-minute drive toward Cortina d'Ampezzo, your home for the next three nights. En route, today's walk takes place in the stunning area of the Gardena Pass—famous for both Stone Age remains and its World War I history. The alpine world of Passo Gardena, as it's known in Italian, is truly awe-inspiring, with dramatic peaks in every direction: Puez-Odle Nature Park to the north, the Sassolungo Group to the west, and to the east, the jagged summits of the Val Badia and the legendary Fanes range.

A cable car ride from the Plans-Frara station brings you to Rifugio Jimmi (at 7,300 feet) and the trailhead. From here, the path continues up to the Crespeina saddle (8,300 feet), then descends to Ütia Col Pradat, an enchanting lodge at the foot of Mount Sassongher. A hearty meal is served outdoors (weather permitting)—perhaps topped off with *kaiserschmarrn* (sweet shredded pancakes with fruit compote)—all enjoyed with spectacular terrace views over the Mittagstal, Marmolada, Civetta, Langkofel, and Sassongher peaks.

In the afternoon, descend to Colfosco by gondola and meet your private bus for the 50-minute drive to Cortina d'Ampezzo. Known as the “Pearl of the Dolomites,” this elegant alpine town is considered one of Italy’s most beautiful—and fashionable—ski resort destinations. Set in a wide valley surrounded by 9,000-foot peaks, it boasts not only world-class ski runs but also a bustling pedestrian center lined with chic cafés and boutique shops.

Your historic alpine hotel is perfectly located in the heart of the pedestrian zone. After settling into your room, enjoy dinner on your own—either at one of the hotel’s dining venues or at a nearby restaurant. (Your trip leaders will provide recommendations.)

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5

Sesto Dolomites: Tre Cime di Lavaredo Circuit and Dolomieu Trail. Independent Exploration of Cortina d'Ampezzo

6 miles, easy to moderate, 525-ft. elevation gain and loss with one steep/challenging 280-ft. elevation gain and 2.5 miles, easy to moderate, 1,475-ft. elevation loss

This morning, a 45-minute drive brings you to the start of today’s walk—a circuit around the Tre Cime di Lavaredo, located in the Sesto Dolomites Natural Park*. These three distinctive peaks are among the most iconic landmarks in the Dolomites—beloved by climbers for their sheer rock faces and admired for their dramatic pastel and vibrant red hues at sunset. They also served as the setting for some of the most intense mountain warfare of World War I. In fact, this range marked the border between Austria and Italy until 1918. Today’s loop hike offers breathtaking views from every angle, beginning with a drive along the scenic Tre Cime Panoramic Road to Rifugio Auronzo at 7,644 feet.

After a fortifying cappuccino, set off on a wide trail—a former military track—just below the peaks. You’ll pass a chapel commemorating World War I and continue past Rifugio Lavaredo. Soon, incredible vistas of the Tre Cime open up, and you may spot climbers scaling seemingly impossible vertical walls. As you dip below the Mount Paterno ridge—still riddled with wartime tunnels—you follow a level traverse across a scree slope to Rifugio Locatelli.

After a brief rest, your route descends a series of switchbacks and traverses the undulating Pian da Rin, a

grassy, wildflower-filled basin where whistling marmots may be heard. Here, silence reigns, broken only by the occasional clang of cowbells. A short but steep ascent of about 280 steps—likely the most challenging section of the day—is rewarded with a flat trail to a mountain dairy hut, where you may be able to sample fresh homemade yogurt or cheese.

Rounding the southern flank of the Tre Cime at Col di Mezzo pass, you close the loop back at Rifugio Auronzo. A short drive brings you to the lakeside town of Misurina, where you'll enjoy lunch on your own at one of several charming restaurants—perhaps sampling local specialties like *canederli* (cheese-stuffed bread dumplings) or *patate all'ampezzana* (pan-fried potatoes and onions with local *speck* ham).

Back in Cortina by mid-afternoon, and weather (and energy) permitting, you may wish to join your leaders for an optional panoramic hike dedicated to Déodat de Dolomieu, the French geologist for whom both the mineral and the Dolomites were named. This trail begins at Rifugio Faloria (6,965 feet), reached by cable car from central Cortina. It traces a ridge past rocky peaks, then winds through a forest of larch, stone pine, and fir, becoming a rough road as it descends to the hamlet of Rio Gere. Along the way, enjoy sweeping views of the Tofane and Pomagagnon ranges, Cristallo, and the Ampezzo Valley. From Rio Gere, you may either take a cable car or continue on foot back to Cortina.

Alternatively, you may choose to spend your afternoon at leisure—exploring Cortina's shops and museums, or unwinding in the hotel's wellness area. Dinner is on your own tonight, with many fine local restaurants to choose from.

**This hike may be substituted with another of similar caliber due to daily permitting restrictions.*

Included Meals: Breakfast

DAY 6

Parco Naturale delle Dolomiti Ampezzane: Lagazuoi to Rifugio Dibona and Cinque Torri

4-5 miles, moderate, 655-ft. elevation gain and 2,790-ft. elevation loss

Today's walk is considered one of the finest routes in the Dolomites for its variety of scenery—soaring peaks, remote wild landscapes, and powerful remnants of World War I. After breakfast at your hotel, you

board a coach for a 30-minute drive, followed by a chairlift ride up to Rifugio Scoiattoli, the start of your hike. Built by mountain guide Lorenzo Lorenzi in 1969, this alpine hut sits at 7,300 feet and offers spectacular 360-degree views of the Dolomites, including Croda da Lago and the Cinque Torri.

This area bears witness to intense battles fought between Austrian and Italian forces during World War I. Thousands of feet of wartime tunnels were carved into the rock in a struggle to control this strategic region. Today, these tunnels and trenches have been restored as part of the Great War Outdoor Museum of the Cinque Torri—the largest World War I open-air museum in the Dolomites. As you walk along a well-established trail beneath Monte Nuvolau, enjoy sweeping vistas of the Tofane range, Mount Lagazuoi, and Falzarego Pass. Keep an eye out—you may spot sure-footed chamois navigating the rocky slopes.

Your path winds through dramatic mountain terrain, rock faces, and cascading waterfalls before reaching Rifugio Averau at 7,926 feet. This family-run chalet, famously dubbed “The Restaurant at the Edge of the Universe” by *The Sunday Times*, is a treasured stop along the Alta Via. Here, you enjoy a delicious lunch while taking in breathtaking views of Civetta and Marmolada. Indulge in traditional dishes such as smoked roast beef with arugula or Paola and Sandrone’s fresh homemade pasta.

After lunch, continue to the chairlift for your descent to the valley, then return to Cortina by coach. This afternoon is yours to relax, pack, or browse local shops for souvenirs.

Tonight, gather with your group for a special farewell dinner just outside of town. You’re welcomed with a glass of sparkling prosecco on the deck of a charming chalet restaurant nestled by a small lake at the foot of Croda da Lago. In this intimate setting, your *primo piatto* may be handmade, crescent-shaped ravioli stuffed with red beets and topped with melted butter, poppy seeds, and parmesan. A main course of perfectly grilled lake trout may follow, as you toast to an unforgettable journey through the Dolomites.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch, Dinner

DAY 7

Your Country Walkers Vacation Ends

Your tour concludes after breakfast at your hotel in Cortina d’Ampezzo, and by the hotel’s check-out time of 11:00 a.m. You’ll bid farewell to your Country Walkers leaders and fellow travelers. The hotel staff will be happy to assist you with arrangements for your onward travels.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Air Package

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓	✓
14 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 4 dinners	✓	✓
Local leaders with you throughout tour	✓	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓	✓
Roundtrip airfare	✓	
One extra night in Bressanone/Brixen and one extra night in Cortina d'Ampezzo	✓	
Airport car service for arrival and departure	✓	
Pre- and post-trip breakfasts	✓	
Business-class upgrades available	✓	