

## ENVIRONS OF TRENTO

The mountains around Trento are steep and precipitous, popular for winter and summer sports: there are ski resorts on the high slopes, and many of the vertical cliff faces are popular with rock climbers. There are also areas that are popular with hikers. Vines are cultivated on the lower slopes.

### MONTE BONDONE

**Monte Bondone** (map A, B3), cloaked in forests, overlooks Trento from the southwest. It is known for its alpine flora and as a ski resort, and is approached by a road that ascends in sweeping hairpin bends. From Vezane there are marked walking trails. Higher up is the Conca delle Viote, a glacial depression set beneath the peaks of the massif (Palon, 2090m; Doss d'Abiamo, 2140m; Monte Cornetto, 2180m), and here you will find the **Giardino Botanico Alpino** (open June–Sept or by appointment; see the [muse.it](http://muse.it) website), with over a thousand plant species from the Trentino and the principal mountains of the world, particularly medicinal plants threatened by extinction. Close by, also open by pre-booking, is the Terrazza delle Stelle observatory and events space.

### VEZZANO AND THE VALLE DEI LAGHI

The village of **Vezzano** (map A, B2), 12km west of Trento, marks the beginning of the municipality of the Valle dei Laghi. A walking trail known as the Sentiero Geologico A. Stoppani begins from here and takes you through a limestone landscape marked with features created by ancient glaciation. Another trail, the Sentiero dei Sette Passi, links the scattered settlements of the community. It is possible to pick up the trail from various points and to walk sections of it, taking in a varied landscape of wilderness, habitation and vineyard. One of the small towns linked by this trail is **Padergnone**, which sits at the foot of a rushing torrent whose abundant waters are now channelled into a leat, or *roggia*, used for fish farming. A golden-coloured fish, the *salmerino* (char), is reared here.

A beautiful path leads up alongside the torrent, through the Canevai gorge, past waterfalls and a derelict mill, to **Calavino** (walking time 45mins), a village that once enjoyed great prosperity from its water, which was used to power sawmills, smithies, textile mills and mills for grinding grain. Calavino was the birthplace, in 1512, of Cristoforo Madruzzo, Prince-Bishop of Trento during the Council of Trent. The Castello Madruzzo rises above the town.

Calavino and Padergnone are both surrounded by vineyards, where Nosiola grapes are grown. This is used to make dry white wines as well as the *Vino Santo* of the region, traditionally pressed in Holy Week from grapes that have been specially



View of Castel Toblino, on the lake of the same name.

dried on racks to shrivel them and concentrate the sugars. The hillsides here also pride themselves on being the northernmost point in Europe where olives will ripen.

### LAGO TI TOBLINO

The glassy waters of the **Lago di Toblino** (map A, B3) reflect the steep rocky mountains that overlook it from the north. It is separated by a narrow isthmus from the smaller Lago di Santa Massenza, which has a hydroelectric plant. The north shore of Lago di Toblino is traversed by a path and wooden walkway along the reed beds and under overhanging trees, among them specimens of 'Bald Cypress', *Taxodium distichum*, introduced in the 19th century. Jutting into the lake is a tiny peninsula with the medieval Castel Toblino, which was transformed from a fortress into a residence in the 16th century by Bernardo Cles and after him by the Madruzzo family. It later passed to the Counts of Wolkenstein (who planted the taxodium trees and introduced the custom of making *Vino Santo*; see pp. 116–7). The castle today functions as a restaurant and at its foot, on the lakeshore, there is a café with a waterfront terrace.

From Castel Toblino, a marked path leads along a cypress avenue and then steeply up a gorge with a rushing torrent, to **Ranzo**. Fire salamanders (black with yellow spots) live in the forests here. From Ranzo you can continue to the high pastures of the **Altopiano della Paganella**, with views of the Lago di Molveno (see p. 38). Notices at the foot of the path warn that this is bear country and that walkers should take particular care. Bears were introduced to this area of Trentino from Slovenia in the late 1990s (also see p. 38).

**MART**

The Museo d'Arte Moderna e Contemporanea di Rovereto e Trento, or MART for short (*mart.tn.it/en*), designed by Mario Botta and Giulio Andreolli, opened in 2002 behind the historic façades of Corso Bettini. It offers a programme of changing temporary exhibitions and its permanent holdings include an exceptionally fine collection of Italian Modernism, with works by Fortunato Depero and other artists of the Futurist era, as well as paintings and sculpture by artists ranging in date from the early years of the 20th century until the present day. These include Francesco Hayez from the 19th century; Novecento artists, among them Mario Sironi, Giorgio de Chirico and Achille Funi; artists of the post-WWII era; examples of Arte Povera and significant works from the later 20th century and a collection of Trentino artists.

**ROVERETO AND THE FIRST WORLD WAR**

Rovereto's castle is home to the **Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra** (*museodellaguerra.it*), with some 30 rooms devoted to the First World War and a section devoted to the Napoleonic wars, 19th-century arms and armies and the Italian Risorgimento. The Great War is also commemorated south of the town centre by the **Sacrario di Castel Dante** (1936) and the **Campana dei Caduti**, the largest bell in Italy, which tolls every evening for the fallen of all nations. The front line of 1916–18 was in the mountains south of the town (*see below*).

## ENVIRONS OF ROVERETO

**MONTE ZUGNA**

Rising to the east of the Adige valley is the **Coni Zugna** (1865m), 20km south of Rovereto, reached by a winding road from Albaredo (*map A, B3*). Here a joint project, undertaken by the Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra in cooperation with the Museo Civico and the Fondazione Parco Botanico del Cengio Alto di Rovereto, has recovered some impressive First World War artefacts in the area of Trincerone-Kopfstellung. This was the last Italian stronghold against Austria-Hungary and, conversely, an important target for the Austrian army. From the summit on a clear day looking south, the tip of Lake Garda can be seen. Looking north, the city of Trento is visible. Thus the mountain became a symbol for both armies: Italy was desperate to secure the territory; Austria-Hungary not to lose it. The restoration of the first Italian and Austro-Hungarian lines, coordinated by architects Alessandro Andreolli and Giorgio Campolongo, has created an educational walk around and through the trenches and across the narrow no-man's-land; text panels explain the military organisation of the mountain and offer details on the individual artefacts.

**CASTLES IN THE VALLAGARINA**

Rovereto straddles the Vallagarina, where the Adige valley begins to widen and flatten out. Just north of Rovereto, on the way to Trento, is Calliano (*map A, B3*), above which rises **Castel Beseno** (*info on the buonconsiglio.it website*), which controlled the valley.

The hill was inhabited in the Iron Age as well as in the Roman and Lombard periods. The castle dates from the 12th century and was owned by the Castelbarco from 1303 until the 15th century, when it was given to the Trapp family, who donated it to the province in 1973. It has recently been restored to host temporary exhibitions and includes two large courtyards within its impressive walls. A room of the castle preserves 16th-century frescoes of the Months. Another impressive medieval stronghold can be seen at Avio, the **Castello di Sabbionara**, which commands a fine view of the river and its valley (and today also of the motorway).

## LAKE GARDA

Lake Garda lies just over 20km west of Rovereto. It spans three regions of Italy: its west shore is in Lombardy; to the east lies the Veneto, and the breezy north end, where the water is deepest, is in Trentino-Alto Adige and has a distinctly alpine feel. Because of the good winds, this part of the lake is much used for sailing and windsurfing and international competitions are often held here. The predominant winds (which can swell into violent storms) are the *sover* (or *soar* or *sora*) from the north, and the *ora* from the south.

The summer resort of **Torbole sul Garda** (*map A, A3–B3*), officially Nago-Torbole, played a part in the war of 1439 between the Visconti and the Venetians, when fleets of warships were dragged overland by teams of oxen and launched into the lake here (the '*Galeas per montes*' expedition). Here, Italy and the Mediterranean world truly begins. Goethe stayed at Torbole in 1786 and was entranced by it.

### Goethe in Torbole

12th September (after dinner)

How much do I wish that my friends were with me for a moment to enjoy the prospect, which now lies before my eyes. I might have been in Verona this evening but a magnificent natural phenomenon was in my vicinity: Lake Garda, a splendid spectacle, which I did not want to miss, and now I am nobly rewarded for taking this circuitous route. After 5 o'clock I started from Roveredo, up a side valley, which still pours its waters into the Etsch. After ascending this, you come to an immense rocky bar, which you must cross in descending to the lake. Here appeared the finest calcareous rocks for pictorial study. On descending you come to a little village on the northern end of the lake, with a little port, or rather landing-place, which is called Torbole. On my way upwards I was constantly accompanied by fig-trees, and, descending into the rocky atmosphere, I found the first olive-tree full of fruit...

Goethe: *Italian Journey* (1786). Translated by Rev. A.J.W. Morrison, 1881.

**RIVA DEL GARDA**

Riva del Garda (*map A, A3*), the Roman *Ripa*, is a lively town, sheltered by Monte Rochetta to the west. Like the rest of the region, it belonged to Austria-Hungary

### THE SCILIAR-CATINACCIO/SCHLERN-ROSENGARTEN NATURE RESERVE



The Latemar (2842m), viewed from the Sella Cavaccio/Tschafatsch Sattel in the Sciliar/Schlern.

The Sciliar-Catinaccio/Schlern-Rosengarten nature reserve, established in 1974, combines the rocky walls, cliffs and the ledges of the Sciliar Massif with the verdant pastures of the Alpe di Siusi/Seiser Alm, where new building (including ski-lifts) is strictly limited and the circulation of motor vehicles is forbidden. The geological history of the Dolomites can be read clearly here. Above the oldest rock, dark-red quartziferous porphyry of the Adige valley, are the sandstones of the Val Gardena, which, because of their high iron content, colour the soil red. Higher up, covered by forests, are rocks that were formed 65 million years ago, in the Permian and lower Triassic eras. There follow layers of sedimentary and volcanic rock—a clear sign that the coral reefs of the ancient Mediterranean (which over time would become the pink calcium magnesium carbonate, dolomite) were periodically submerged beneath layers of lava and ash (to which high pastures like the Seiser Alm owe their fertility).

The Sciliar accommodates an extraordinary variety of plant species. In addition to the common alpine flowers (gentians, crocuses, anemones) you'll find numerous saxifrages (*S. oppositifolia*, *S. caesia* and *S. squarrosa*, the 'Dolomites saxifrage'), the so-called *Strega dello Sciliar* (*Armeria alpina* or Alpine thrift), edelweiss, alpine poppies, streaked daphnae, and many more. In the forests, keep an eye out for chamois, roe deer, hare and ermine; sparrowhawks and various owls; grouse, white partridge, alpine crows, black woodpeckers, and numerous sparrows. For more information, see the website: [seiseralm.it](http://seiseralm.it).

## THE STRADA DELLE DOLOMITI

The famous Strada delle Dolomiti (Road 241; *map B, C3*) runs from Bolzano on the west side of the Dolomites to Cortina d'Ampezzo on the east. It is one of the most beautiful roads in the Alps, as well as a magnificent feat of engineering.

From Bolzano the road enters the wild and romantic gorge of the Val d'Ega, passing the Ponte della Cascata. It then passes the resorts of Nova Levante/Welschnofen (1182m) and the Lago di Carezza/Karersee, dominated by the two most typical Dolomite mountain groups with their characteristic battlemented skyline, the **Latemar** (2842m) and the **Catinaccio/Rosengarten** (2981m). The road summit is reached at the Passo di Costalunga/Karerpas (1745m), with a splendid view ahead of the Val di Fassa and the Marmolada and San Martino mountains. The **Marmolada** (3342m) is the largest and highest group of mountain peaks in the Dolomites. Its retreating glacier was the site of an avalanche in the summer of 2022, claiming several lives.

A winding descent through high pastures brings the road into the Val Cordevole (Province of Belluno, Veneto) and then a long ascent beneath the ruined castle of Andraz leads to the Passo di Falzarego (2105m), a hotly contested strongpoint in the First World War (ruined fortifications are visible by the roadside), beyond which the road descends to Cortina d'Ampezzo (*map B, D2*).

### WHERE TO STAY AND EAT ON THE STRADA DEL VINO/WEINSTRASSE & IN THE SCILIAR-CATINACCIO/SCHLERN-ROSENGARTEN

#### **Andriano/Andrian** (*map B, B2*)

€–€€ **Schwarzer Adler**. A fine old inn, run by the Mathà family since the late 19th century. Good, wholesome food is served in the wood-panelled *Stube*. It is also a guesthouse, with comfortable rooms decorated in contemporary style. *Piazza Sant'Urbano 2. schwarzeradler-andrian.net*.

#### **Caldaro/Kaltern** (*map B, B3*)

€€ **Seehotel Ambach**. A beautiful style-statement on the Kalterersee by the South Tyrolean architect Othmar Barth (1927–2010). His philosophy concerning the relationship between

architecture and landscape (they were one, he argued) had a profound effect on younger architects of the Alpine Arc. The hotel appears today exactly as it did when it was built in the 1970s, the only difference being the trees in the lakeside park, which are now much taller. The low, curving form of the building follows the contours of the hillside so as to seem like a natural outcrop. The Ambach family, who commissioned the building, worked closely with the architect and care has been taken to maintain the '70s interior décor. There is also a beautiful swimming pool. [seehotel-ambach.com](http://seehotel-ambach.com).



### SECOND AND THIRD COURTYARDS

The lovely second courtyard, the *Stiftshof*, shaded by trees, has a well at its centre known as the **Pozzo delle Meraviglie/Wunderbrunnen**. It takes the form of a marble basin (1508) surmounted by an octagonal canopy of 1669 decorated with charming depictions of the traditional Seven Wonders of the World accompanied by a new, Eighth Wonder, the Abbey of Neustift itself. The entrance to the Museum is here. Before you go in, it is worth continuing to the third courtyard, where you can enter the **Basilica vestibule** to see the fine fresco of the founding of the abbey, showing Bishop Hartmann with plans of his new monastic complex. The entrance to the rest of the basilica is through the museum, but through the grille here you get a fine view up the nave. The third courtyard also serves as the canons' graveyard. Behind the basilica, a gate in the high perimeter wall leads out into vineyards and a prospect of dramatic mountains.

### THE ABBEY BASILICA AND ITS CLOISTER

The abbey church (**Basilica Abbaziale/Stiftsbazilika**), although a Romanesque foundation, was rebuilt in the colourful Bavarian Baroque form in 1740 and is adorned with exuberant frescoes and encrusted with stucco. The dominant colour is pink and the overall effect is one of exuberance. The stuccoes are by Anton Gigl and the frescoes by Matthäus Günther of Augsburg, known for his church decorations. Those in the nave show scenes from the life of St Augustine, and those in the sanctuary depict the life of the Virgin, to whose Assumption the basilica is dedicated.

Detail of the *Altarpiece of St Catherine* by Friedrich Pacher. Unperturbed by her imprisonment, the saint (with the help of an angel) converts the Roman empress Faustina to Christianity.



Fresco in the entranceway of the abbey church at Novacella/Neustift, showing the founder, Bishop Hartmann, approving plans for its construction.

The vaulted walks of the **cloister** are decorated with frescoes and the funerary monuments and tomb slabs of prelates and nobles. The modern fountain in the centre of the garden is topped by a statue of the Blessed Hartmann.

### THE MUSEUM

The abbey museum is superbly arranged and presented, with displays of art and sculpture from the Middle Ages to the Baroque, mostly by Tyrolean masters. The beautiful wooden **drinking bowl of the Blessed Hartmann** can be admired, dating from the 12th century and still used by the canons on his feast day. Among the paintings and altarpieces are 15th-century works by the **Master of Uttenheim**, Leonhard of Brixen and **Friedrich Pacher** (the splendid *Altarpiece of St Catherine of Alexandria* includes a memorable scene of the saint behind prison bars but still managing to convert the Roman empress Faustina and her retinue of proud ladies, all dressed in the very latest contemporary fashions). Pacher is known to have lived in Brunico/Brunneck and was certainly influenced by the style of Michael Pacher (see p. 104), to whom he may have been related, although scholars have not been able to ascertain this for certain. From the 17th century there are works by **Stephan Kessler**, one of the most successful Tyrolean artists of the Baroque era. Born in Bavaria, he became a citizen of Bolzano in 1643 and opened a workshop there. His paintings, often of allegorical subjects, were popular with both the church and the