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# The Dolomite Mountains

Cycle along the epic journey of J.Gilbert and G.C.Churchill on their exploration trip across the Dolomites, held in between 1861 and 1863. The book wrote by these English pioneers is one of the nicest, a classic masterpiece of the discovery of the Dolomites. Follow them enjoying their drawings and watercolors, comparing their sensibility for the mountain and landscape views with nowadays reality. Much has changed, but we are sure that the sense of wonder that your eyes and souls will feel will be very similar to their.

13 days - 565km/351mi - 17.220mt+/56.497ft+ - moderate

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*“Here the traveller obtains a view of the Dolomite Mountains. They are unlike any other mountains, and are to be seen nowhere else among the Alps. They arrest the attention by the singularity and picturesqueness of their forms, by their sharp peaks or horns, sometimes rising up in pinnacles and obelisks, at others extending in serrated ridges, teathed like the jaw of an alligator; now fencing in the valley with an escarped precipice many thousand feet high, and often cleft with numerous fissures, all running vertically. They are perfectly barren, destitute of vegetation of any sort, and usually of a light yellow or whitish colour”*

*“They, the Dolomites, ‘form a striking contrast to all other mountains in their dazzling whiteness, in their barren sterility. . . . Sometimes they take the appearance of towers and obelisks divided from one another by cracks some thousand feet deep; at others, the points are so numerous and slender that they put one in mind of a bundle of bayonets or sword-blades..*



**The Dolomite Mountains** tour starts from the city of **Bolzano** - *“In Bolzano you will see, looking eastward by evening light, spires and towers of Dolomite overtopping everything, and illuminated when all else is dark. It is a sight both beautiful and mysterious. They rise with such lofty independence of the surrounding scenery, are shattered into shapes so strange, cut the sky with such sharpness of outline, and gleam with so unearthly a light, that you are riveted by the spectacle. — You cannot but long to explore those fastnesses, and touch the bases of those awful walls”* - to go towards the green , perfectly kept countryside made of pastures, woods, medieval villages and century old farms laying underneath the *“high Schlern”* mountain plateau. From the sweet landscape of the **Seiser Alm/Alpe di Siusi** plateau you’ll explore Eastward the **Val di Fassa**, climbing the at the feet of the *“Marmolata”* the highest among the Dolomite’s peaks to descend to the villages of **Caprile** and **Alleghe**, from where: *“to the South, and close at hand, beheld, to our delight, the great mountain of our mid-day wonderment. All ruddy in the sunset, its pinnacled façade rose like some stupendous cathedral in the vista of the valley, and Caprile nestled at its foot. That view, favored certainly at the moment by its suddenness, and by the striking effect of light, remains almost unrivalled in our Alpine experience. The mountain is the Civita”*.

The route follow the ancient network of roads used by miners, charcoal burner, shepherds and pilgrims to reach **Cortina** *“Cortina looks larger than it is, for the buildings are*

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spread spaciouly about, Several are official, for the administration of the Ampezzo district; and many of them inns, accommodating a busy traffic in timber and flour between Italy and Tyrol, The tower of the church, a recent erection by a Vienna architect, is a handsome campanile, separate from the edifice, after the Italian manner, and so helps to mark the place as a border town” to continues then on the **Strada d’Ampezzo** (Ampezzo Road) till **Dobbiaco**, the Northern point of this tour. Explore the **Valle di Sesto** - with its iconic **Drei Schuster** peak “The unexpected grandeur of the Sexten valley is due to a range of Dolomites now coming first into sight, which, we are inclined to say, beats everything dolomitic in our experience. They stand in line with the **Schuster**, and belong to the Auronzo block of mountains. A short lateral valley—the **Fischelein Thal** - breaks away into the heart of them from Sexten. At the near corner stands the Schuster, at the farther, **Monte Popera**, and in the midst, the **Zwolfe Spitzen** point their fingers skywards, These two—the Popera and Zwolfe Spitzen—rule the scene with an Arctic, haggard grandeur, that, once beheld, will never be forgotten”, the historical villages of the **Comelico region**, get to the town of **Auronzo** with its lake and cycle across the **Cadore** area.



Meet the giants **Antelao** and **Pelmo** mountains “It was the Pelmo on the left that now absorbed all attention. His tower-like form has been often mentioned, and the vast bulk of this, as we entered the Alpine scene smote us with wonder and awe. His form was cut out in shadow against the western sky; a cloud hovered over the broken summit, and the horizontal lines of bedding, which most singularly mark the sides, looked like a gigantic staircase ascending to the mysterious cloud-filled hollow”, have one of the best gelato ever in **Agordo**, enjoying its “Two enormous towers, buttresses of the **Palle di St. Lucano**, stand there impending over Agordo. Twin cathedral towers, one may ‘call them, but that they are ten times as loft. The mass they belong to—the **Cima di Pape**—reaches to 8.260 feet ; and, aided by tint and cloud, they look any height you like” to head towards the **Pale di San Martino** area “From **Primiero** itself, this amphitheatre of rock-towers and peaks is not seen; but they end in a fantastically shaped mountain immediately opposite the town, which is the principal feature in the valley. Nothing in Dolomite is like it, for the singular variety of the horns and pinnacles fringing its sides. It soon passed with us for the \* Procession Mountain,’ since in some directions it appeared as if troops of draped figures were ascending to the

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*often cloud-invested summit*” and the **Val di Fiemme**. Once back to the **Val di Fassa** - follow the last steps of our pioneers to get finally back in **Bolzano**.

## **How to:**

**Access town:** Bolzano

**Starting point:** Bolzano

**Ending point:** Bolzano

Due to the length of the tour, if you don't have all the time at your disposal, you could consider to cycle a part of it. Cortina, Dobbiaco and Agordo are the main towns you'll meet, from where public buses or trains can take you back to Bolzano.

The locations of the overnight been chosen are the same our Englishmen did. These locations works perfectly for the logistic of the whole route. Shortest stages can be linked together so to reduce the overall number of days of cycling. A custom mix of the stages (cycling one day plus 1/2 of the next day) also would be possible.

## **Stages&Overnights**

- hotel overnight in Bolzano the day before the tour starts
- Day 1\_ 32km/20mi - 1250mt+/4101ft+\_hotel overnight
- Day 2\_ 42km/27mi - 1630mt+/5348ft+\_guesthouse overnight
- Day 3\_ 39km/24,2mi - 1216mt+/3990ft+\_hotel overnight
- Day 4\_ 38km/23,6mi - 1540mt+/5052ft+\_guesthouse overnight
- Day 5\_ 27km/16,8mi - 1000mt+/3280ft+\_hotel overnight
- Day 6\_ 31km/19,3mi - 1230mt+/4035ft+\_guesthouse overnight
- Day 7\_ 57km/35,4mi - 1050mt+/3445ft+\_mountain refugio overnight
- Day 8\_ 35km/21,7mi - 750mt+/2460ft+\_guesthouse overnight
- Day 9\_ 46km/28,5mi - 1600mt+/5250ft+\_mountain refugio overnight
- Day 10\_ 39km/24,2mi - 1150mt+/3773ft+\_hotel overnight
- Day 11\_ 48km/29,8mi - 1830mt+/6004ft+\_guesthouse overnight
- Day 12\_ 25km/15,5mi - 1200mt+/3937ft+\_mountain refugio overnight
- Day 13\_ 106km/65,8 - 1770mt+/5807ft+\_back to Bolzano\_hotel overnight

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