

TRENTINO

peak experiences

FROM WAR TO PEACE

From World War I front line
to footpaths bringing peoples
and cultures together



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TRENTINOGRANDEGUERRA.IT

Map of the area included

The war fronts left their mark on both the land and the people of this region. Dozens of fortifications, hundreds of kilometres of trenches, 60,000 men sent to war with over 11,000 dead, and 100,000 people displaced. The people were also divided in their allegiances, between loyal subjects of the Empire and *irredentists*.

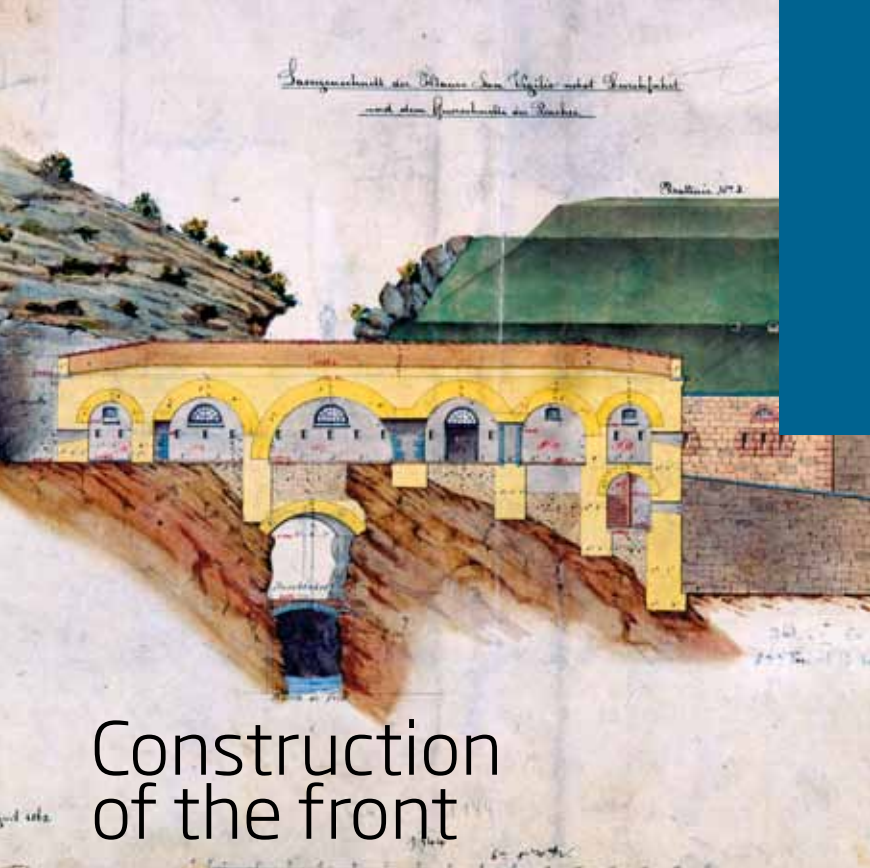
Yet these mountains, where the First World War was fought in a highly distinctive way, have come back to life. Wounded nature has regained its strength, the people have rebuilt their homes and work places, and Trentino has been transformed from contested territory to a land of reconciliation and dialogue.

We have devised a simple way of helping you understand all these issues and find out what makes the region special: a way of enabling you to combine hikes in the mountains with walks through the towns to discover a twentieth century that, thanks to salvaging and restoration work, is still alive and waiting to be discovered. Our aim is to help you transform your holiday in Trentino into something unique, something that will enrich you physically, spiritually and intellectually.

If you are inspired to delve deeper into what you have just read, you will find a wealth of itineraries, suggestions, projects, information, events, catalogues and much more on trentinograndeguerra.it.







Construction of the front

These days, when we can cross the borders between the various European countries with ease, it is perhaps difficult to grasp the meaning of the word "border" and all its implications as it was understood at the end of the nineteenth and beginning of the twentieth centuries. It was a line that was defended and protected at any cost. It's almost impossible to imagine, but this was why green, wooded valleys, pastures, vineyards and orchards were transformed into a huge construction site for almost a century. "Fortify! Fortify!" This was the order from the Austrian high command, which, after the loss of Lombardy and Veneto in the Italian wars of independence, feared that the Kingdom of Italy would continue expansion into the "unredeemed" lands of Trento and Trieste.

Alongside existing nineteenth century forts, other more modern fortifications and a series of strongholds and trenches were gradually built. It was an enor-



amous construction campaign in preparation for what would later be known as the Great War: a total of 80 fortifications were constructed in Trentino alone. It should be remembered that this territory was only a part of the border between Italy and Austria-Hungary, but the mountains demanded commitment and audacious schemes to guarantee a reliable line of defence along hundreds of kilometres. The region was enclosed by a line of fortifications that included blockades at Tonale-Rocchetta ([+39 0463 758200](tel:+390463758200)) and Lardaro (ecomuseovalledelchiese.it [+39 0465 622137](tel:+390465622137)), fortresses at Riva (gardatrentino.it [+39 0464 554444](tel:+390464554444)) and Trento (apt.trento.it [+39 0461 216000](tel:+390461216000)), to which were added the defences at Tenna (visitvalsugana.it [+39 0461 727760](tel:+390461727760)) and the fortifications of the Adige-Vallarsa sector. Particular mention should be made of the fortresses of Folgaria and Lavarone on the plateaux (folgarialavarone-luserna.it [+39 0464 724100](tel:+390464724100)), which the Austrian command hoped would block



a possible breakthrough by the Italians and serve as a the base for a counteroffensive, which indeed took place in May 1916 with the *Strafexpedition*. Many of those formidable and daunting fortifications were destroyed in the war, others now lie in ruins, but others have been restored and can now be visited, such as Forte Belvedere-Gschwent (fortebelvedere.org +39 0464 780005), built between 1909 and 1912 to control access from the Val d’Astico to the Altopiano di Lavarone. Spared from the destructive fury of the war and the ravages of the post-war period, it is now a museum. Forte Pozzacchio in Val-larsa (visitrovereto.it +39 0464 430363) was also built to repel an advance from the direction of Vicenza. This unique structure, built into the rock and a precursor to World War II military engineering, was still under construction when the conflict broke out and remained more or less incomplete. Although much older, having been erected between 1860 and 1861, Forte Cadine near Trento



(apt.trento.it +39 0461 216000) and Forte Larino at Lardaro (visitchiese.it +39 0465 901217), enduring examples of the boldness of military engineering, are now in excellent condition following painstaking restoration. Forte Larino was reinforced in the late 1800s by Forte Corno (visitchiese.it +39 0465 901217). Another late nineteenth century pair of fortresses guard the route through the Val-sugana: Forte Tenna and Forte San Biagio were built on opposite sides of the valley to block any advance towards Trento.

The Battlefields



The southern Tyrol front proved to be one of the least predictable of all the European fronts. As perceptions of the land and its strategic network changed, so too did the tactics, and lines and troops were gradually moved from the valley floor to the higher altitudes of the mountains. These changes to the front affected vast areas and necessitated the evacuation of the populations. As many as 100,000 people left Trentino for Bohemia and Moravia or were sent to large camps, such as those at Mitterndorf and Braunau am Inn. These were veritable “cities of wood”, which eventually held up to 20,000 refugees. The high command soon realised that they would have to change the nature of military operations in the region to take account of the terrain, and so the shift was made to mountain warfare. Typical examples are a series of positions that today are located on the borders between Trentino, Veneto and Lombardy: Marmolada, Pasubio, Adamello and the plateaux of Folgaria, Lavarone, Luserna and Asiago.



On the Marmolada, now known as the Queen of the Dolomites, a veritable “city of ice” took shape, an impressive complex comprising 12 km of tunnels dug into the rock and the ice housing kitchens, stores and dormitories. Its purpose was to shelter the Austro-Hungarian soldiers from the cold (outside temperatures could drop to -30°), avalanches and the Italian enemy, who tried to encircle the city with other tunnels, resulting in a series of gruelling encounters in hand-to-hand combat.

The scene on the Pasubio was just as remarkable; between 1915 and 1918 it was occupied by just under 100,000 soldiers who left an enduring mark on the landscape with roads, footpaths, cableways, aqueducts, trenches, camps and galleries. It was one of the most turbulent battlefields in the conflict with particular use made of mine warfare. Both sides built tunnels under the enemy emplacements and triggered ten terrible explosions that permanently altered



the shape of the mountain. The war took a different form on the plateaux, with military operations in the Lavarone, Asiago and Ortigara areas from 1916 onwards. There were violent and bloody clashes, which in 1917 involved an appallingly high number of soldiers. The Battle of Ortigara is still remembered as one of the bloodiest of the conflict on the Italian front.

Terrible battles and confrontations between the troops left behind a shattered land once the war had ended: the landscape was devastated, whole towns and villages had been razed to the ground and factories destroyed. As the people returned from exile they needed to make tremendous sacrifices to rebuild everything.

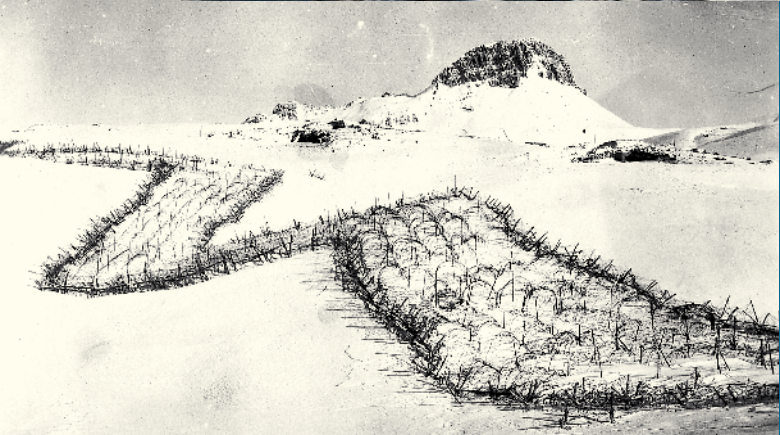


The White War

“There’s something dark up there”. Patches of colour reveal their identity only when you draw near: timbers from military barracks, rotten beams, clusters of barbed wire. They come to light in summer, strewn over the vast white expanses of the glaciers and stony ground at high altitude, and they can’t help but shock. They are the tangible signs of a war that for the first time in human history was fought at inconceivable altitudes in unparalleled environmental conditions that were so harsh and hostile the conflict here had to be defined by a colour: the White War. White, like the glaciers and snows of Ortles, Cevedale, Adamello and Marmolada; white, like the walls of the kilometres of trenches and tunnels dug in the snow and rock, “cities of ice” that were large enough to accommodate barracks and dormitories. Although the highest peaks were devoid of armies in the first winter of the conflict, in the years that followed the Tyrolean lines of defence would run for about 100 km across glaciers and snowfields at alti-



tudes frequently surpassing 3,000 metres in the Ortles-Cevedale, Adamello and Marmolada groups. Military strategy also had to adapt to the environment by engaging small units and employing huge resources to bring in supplies: water was brought up by long pipes, materials were fetched in by mule or by soldiers, prisoners, women and children or with audacious cableways. Nothing was tried and tested. Sentries had to tie themselves to their emplacements to withstand strong gusts of wind; snowfalls and avalanches claimed more victims than bombs and bullets, which in any case often didn't work due to the extreme cold; relief units were slow to arrive. Soon the statistics were doing the talking; huge numbers of deaths from the freezing cold. Although the ice has since destroyed or hidden many traces of this "White War", evidence may sometimes resurface, such as the extraordinary, unexpected discovery of the Corno di Cavento Tunnel (campigliodolomiti.it +39 0465 447501). Dug into the ice and rock at the summit of this 3,402 metre mountain in the Adamello, which passed back and forth between



Austrians and Italians in bloody battles between 1916 and 1918, the tunnel later disappeared, swallowed up by the ice. It became something of a myth until the sweltering summer of 2003 revealed its existence and a restoration project was subsequently launched, which led to the discovery of highly significant evidence and artefacts. Guided tours of the tunnel are now available. Similar and equally symbolic was the fate of the 3,632 metre Punta Linke (valdisole.net +39 0463 753100) in the Ortles-Cevedale group. At the outbreak of war, the Vioz Hütte (Vioz Refuge) on this mountain was converted into one of the highest tactical commands units on the Alpine front. It is now undergoing restoration aimed at opening up the entire site to visitors.

Another crucial and contested sector was Monticelli-Passo Paradiso at Passo del Tonale. At Passo Paradiso itself, the multimedia exhibition "Suoni e voci della Guerra Bianca" (Sounds and Voices of the White War) (valdisole.net +39 0364 903838) is open to the public in summer.



The land of the armistice

A trumpet call, a white flag, a handful of Austrian officers looking out over “no man’s land” at Serravalle in the district of Ala, to the south of Rovereto, their hearts wrung by emotions we cannot even imagine.

This was probably the scene on 29th October 1918 when the first steps were being taken towards the armistice. High-ranking members of the Austrian military were first taken to Avio, then to the Villa San Leonardo in Borghetto, before being transferred behind the front line to Padua, headquarters of the Italian High Command. Here on 3rd November, at Villa Giusti, they signed the declaration of suspension of hostilities between the two states with representatives of the Italian High Command.

The city of St. Anthony was only the first of several locations which marked the stages leading to the conclusion of a dramatic conflict: Compiègne in France, Brest-Litovsk in Belarus, Focșani in Romania...



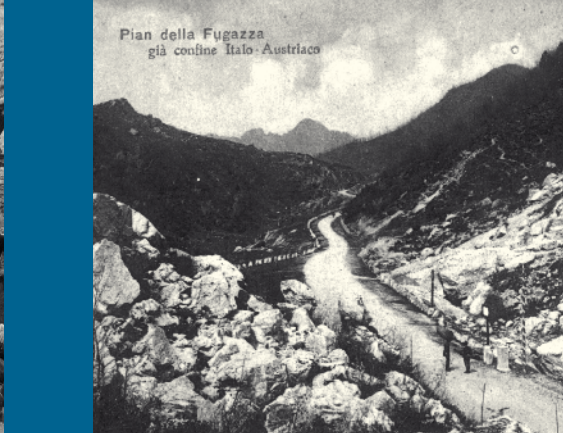
At Serravalle, a monument marks where these events leading up to the armistice took place, and the famous trumpet and white flag are practically an exhibition in themselves at the Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra di Rovereto (museodellaguerra.it +39 0464 438100).

In the years following the war, a monument was created in Rovereto that was to become a symbol around which a whole city and region would become united: la Campana dei caduti, the Bell of Peace, cast from bronze from cannons donated by the belligerent nations. The Foundation entrusted with the safekeeping of the Bell (fondazioneoperacampana.it +39 0464 434412) has a broad-ranging commitment to promoting a culture of peace and dialogue among peoples and nations. The Sacrario di Castel Dante (*Castel Dante War Memorial* +39 0464 432480) and the Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra are also reminders of Rovereto's status as the "City of Peace".



Memory

On 26th October 1921, bowed by the weight of her grief, Maria Bergamas, the mother of an irredentist volunteer, chose one of eleven coffins of unidentified Italian soldiers lined up in the Basilica of Aquileia. That body was to become a symbol for the whole country: il Milite Ignoto (the Unknown Soldier) was moved to Rome on a special train, the tracks lined by crowds who had gathered to pay their respects. It is perhaps one of the most iconic and well-known episodes in the construction of Italy's collective memory after the war. This collective memory was represented above all by commemoration of the fallen, which also served to unite the nation and alleviate suffering. Families, communities and institutions were involved, public ceremonies were organised, books were published, monuments erected in virtually every town and city. New myths were born and old words took on new meanings: "fallen", "homeland", "victory" and, of course, "unknown soldier".



This public memory coexisted with a private memory marked by feelings that were equally painful. Both the land and the population of Trentino were profoundly affected, as all the war zones were. After the war, the people of the “unredeemed lands” found themselves in an unusual situation: torn apart because the monuments commemorated fallen who for the most part were elsewhere, soldiers who had died and were buried far from home in remote regions of Polish Galicia and Russia.

In the dramatic post-war period many symbols of that dreadful tragedy were erected at the sites where it took place, some trivial, some overwhelming. One of these symbols of pain and hope lives on, because every day it rings out from Rovereto across the Vallagarina: the Campana dei Caduti, the Bell of Peace, designed by Don Antonio Rossaro and baptised with the name “Maria Dolens” in 1925 (fondazioneoperacampana.it +39 0464 434412).



Standing above Trento and immediately recognisable by its imposing circular colonnade, is the mausoleum of Italian Nationalist Cesare Battisti (+39 0461 884287), designed in 1916 and inaugurated in 1935 in the presence of King Vittorio Emanuele III. In the years following the war, the remains of tens of thousands of war victims were gathered together in various memorials: in Rovereto, the Sacratio militare di Castel Dante war memorial houses the remains of over 20,000 Italian and Austro-Hungarian soldiers, while at Passo del Tonale a square crypt contains 847 bodies (valdisole.net +39 0364 903838). In fact, large and small cemeteries had sprung up during the conflict around all the combat zones. In 1918 there were more than 1,000 in the region containing the graves of Austro-Hungarians and Italians. Some of them are still well kept, as is the case with the Cimitero militare austroungarico di Bondo (the Austro-Hungarian War Cemetery in Bondo) (visitchiese.it +39 0465 901217), built



in 1916 and now integrated into the small town, while other war cemeteries, such as the Cimitero militare austroungarico di Slaghenaufi (folgariavaroneluserna.it +39 0464 724144) and Costalta (folgariavaroneluserna.it +39 0464 789641) are in more isolated locations among the gentle hills of the Altipiani di Lavarone & Luserna. Most of the Italian soldiers who died between Passo Cinque Croci and Cima di Cece have their final resting place at Caoria in the silence of the Vanoi valley (ecomuseovanoi.it +39 0439 719106).

As a final note, we should add that between 1914 and 1918 approximately 60,000 Trentino men were enlisted, of which 11,400 were killed. This little-known page in the book of the Great War was only recently revealed - in 2010 - at a commemorative ceremony titled "In my heart no-one's cross is missing", a line from one of Giuseppe Ungaretti's poems.



The network of museums

With peace came not only a profusion of monuments and shrines, but also a need to portray the thousand faces of the dreadful tragedy, to retie the threads of collective and private events, and to gather evidence, relics and documents.

Out of this need came the museums of the Great War, some through the determination of private individuals, others through the efforts of institutions, organisations, and associations of ex-combatants. They represented then, as now, the record of an entire region because the people who helped shape them were enthusiasts, ordinary folk and volunteers, who were gradually joined by historical researchers who completed the great work already started. They travelled from one old fortification to another, they walked the trenches, the mountains and the glaciers, they emptied attics and cellars, and



all the material they collected - heirlooms, testimonies, documents, letters, diaries - went to build an invaluable heritage. These museums, of all shapes and sizes, which have sprung up in Trentino not only bear witness to the way the conflict marked this region, but also reflect the huge interest that this subject still arouses in the population. There are nineteen museums dedicated to the 1914-18 war. They can be found in the towns, in the valleys close to the fortifications or in the zones behind the old front lines, and in the mountains where the borders still run, although they are now the regional boundaries with Lombardy and Veneto. Along with various Ecomuseum projects and events, they represent a unique heritage and are some of the most important elements in the Trentino Great War Network (trentinograndeguerra.it).





The Great War front line crossed the whole length of Trentino, following the undulations of the terrain for a total length of 350 km. It passed through its many and varied natural environments, from the peaceful, colourful scenery of Lake Garda to the austere peaks of the Dolomites and the perennial glaciers. In this section, we shall describe what there is to see in each of the various areas of the province. Of course, you can delve into this unique combination of nature and history by exploring every single geographical area, but even one district alone will reveal all - or almost all - of the features that made this South Tyrolean front so remarkable. Fortifications standing guard over valleys, strongholds in dramatic positions, trenches on steep mountainsides and ridges, and the remains of barracks and tunnels cut into the rock - and even the ice -, often in the harsh environments of high altitudes. They can be explored either by taking an easy walk or a challenging hike, or even a more demanding climb, which you can undertake with the help of a professional mountain guide

(sat.tn.it +39 0461 981871; guidealpinetrentino.it +39 0461 981207).







The Path of Peace

Paths through dramatic natural scenery, others of cultural and historical interest or spiritual significance, footpaths for easy walking or challenging routes for experienced mountaineers. They all intertwine to form the Path of Peace. Like other great European routes, which connect places with a shared significance, this path links the places where the Great War left its mark amid the silence of a majestic and serene landscape. It runs from Passo del Tonale to the Marmolada and the entire route is more than 500 km long. As can be gathered from the start and end points, those several hundred kilometres are comprised of many ascents and descents and cross landscapes as diverse as perennial snows and glaciers and the gentle scenery of Lake Garda. To walk the whole length of it would take at least a month, but you can explore small sections of the Path of Peace. There are constant surprises in store for the walker who embarks on this path, which runs along former military roads and trenches,



through First World War sites and spectacular scenery, passing fortifications and scenes of great battles, daring operations and heroic resistance, which have since achieved iconic status.

The long path was constructed between 1986 and 1990 by workers of the Consorzio Lavoro Ambiente and of the Servizio Protezione della Natura e Valorizzazione Ambientale (environmental agencies) of the Autonomous Province of Trento. It was later extended to the Altopiano dei Sette Comuni, including the Ortigara area. Systematic maintenance is currently underway to keep the whole length of the path open.

The path can be walked and some stretches of it can also be covered by mountain bike, taking care to keep to a restrained walking pace. To help you find your way and discover the main sites of interest, the path is way-marked with a dove symbol, white on wood, yellow on the rock.



Val di Sole

North-western Trentino has always been a strategic intersection, a land of transit: it is even said that Charlemagne passed through here. But if the king of the Franks' passage through this area is the stuff of legend, the same cannot be said of the armies that have passed through, from Barbarossa onwards. It is not surprising, then, that at the end of the 1850s, when Lombardy passed to the Kingdom of Sardinia, Tonale became a heavily guarded, fortified border. The Austro-Hungarians built the first wave of military works during the years 1860 and 1861 when they cut the Strino road; this was followed by construction of the Pejo Blockhouse in the nearby valley of the same name and the forts at Mero, Pozzi Alti and Zaccarana between 1906 and 1913. By 1915 they were serving a different purpose, having been altered to resist infantry attack. This part of Trentino soon became one of the most fought-over strategic zones in the so-called "White War", which saw Austro-Hungarian and Italian troops



**Azienda per il Turismo
Val di Sole**

Via G. Marconi 7
38027 Malé
+39 0463 901280
valdisole.net

Ufficio turistico Vermiglio

Via di S. Pietro
38029 Vermiglio
+39 0463 758200
vermigliovacanze.it

contending high altitude mountains and glaciers. Their names are the chapter titles in a book of bitter conflict in gruelling environmental conditions that still arouse astonishment and curiosity.

Those strongholds have become imposing yet accessible ruins and are now open to the public; Forte Strino (associazioneistoriaememoria.it +39 0463 758200), for example, has been converted into an exhibition space.

If you want to find out more about the Great War in the high-altitude mountains, several exhibitions are worth a visit: "Suoni e Voci della Guerra Bianca" (Sounds and Voices of the White War), a multimedia exhibition in the Galleria di Passo Paradiso; 1914-1918 La guerra sulla porta (The War on our Doorstep) at the Pejo Museum (museopejo.it +39 348 7400942), the Museo della Guerra Bianca (Museum of the White War) in Vermiglio (associazioneistoriaememoria.it +39 0463 758200) and Forte Strino.



Val Rendena & Valle del Chiese

Woods, white expanses of snow, castles, and magnificently frescoed churches stand alongside the remains of the front line and the rear zones. This is the scene in Val Rendena, which was not close to the front line and was therefore spared from bombardment, and Valle del Chiese, which was instead cut in two by the battle lines. It was inconceivable, yet expected. So much so that from the mid-nineteenth century the imperial engineers had been attempting to construct an effective blockade to a probable Italian advance from the south by erecting fortifications: Forte Larino, for example, down in the valley near the town of Lardaro, and Forte Corno in a slightly higher position. Both are open to the public, as is another entrenched stronghold on the mountainside, Forte Clemp, above Sant'Antonio di Mavignola, between Pinzolo and Madonna di Campiglio. In the Valle del Chiese, the remains of a stronghold can be seen on the Dosso dei Morti (Hill of the Dead), and there are Italian armoured trenches and tunnels along the Rio Caino stream at San Lorenzo di Condino and along the Pracul history



**Azienda per il Turismo
Madonna di Campiglio Pinzolo -
Val Rendena**

Via Pradalago 4
38084 Madonna di Campiglio
+39 0465 447501
campigliodolomiti.it

**Consorzio Turistico
Pro Loco Val Rendena**

Via San Vigilio 1
38038 Spiazzo Rendena
+39 0465 801544

**Consorzio Turistico
Valle del Chiese**

Fraz. Cologna
38085 Pieve di Bono
+39 0465 901217
visitchiese.it

and nature trail in Val Daone (prolocodaone.it +39 0465 672899). Following recent interventions, the Italian emplacements on the crests of Cima Pissola, Monte Melino and near Castel Condino are now open to the public.

The war quickly shifted to the Adamello glacier where many bloody pages of the White War were written, such as those on Corno di Cavento (3,430 m), which changed hands four times in bloody battles between 1916 and 1918. While the battle raged in the mountains, down in the valley they were anxious to give a dignified burial to the soldiers who had died far home: the Cimitero militare austroungarico di Bondo, begun in 1916, and the Malga Clef war cemeteries are well worth a visit. For a complete overview, visit the Museo della Grande Guerra (Museum of the Great War) in Bersone, Valle del Chiese (+39 320 0767807) and the Museo della Guerra Bianca Adamellina "Recuperanti in Rendena" (Museum of the White War in the Adamello "Salvage Archaeology in Rendena") in Spiazzo Rendena (museograndeguerra.com +39 0465 801544).



Valle di Ledro and the Upper Garda

History had already demonstrated that the Valle di Ledro and Lake Garda were potential access routes to southern Tyrol. Garibaldi's troops ventured onto the narrow road between Storo and Riva in 1866 during the III War of Independence, but their advance was checked at Bezzecca by a telegram from General La Marmora, to which Giuseppe Garibaldi famously answered with his laconic "I obey". From this little town in the Ledro valley - which has a small Garibaldi Museum (+39 0464 508182) - visitors can explore the numerous trenches and tunnels on the Colle Santo Stefano, where there is also a small church and ossuary, recently restored by the Soprintendenza ai Beni Architettonici (Department of Architectural Heritage). The trenches have also been restored at Dromaè, near Mezzolago, farthest outpost of the Austro-Hungarian Empire at the foot of Cima Oro.



Ingarda Trentino

Largo Medaglie d'oro al valore militare 5
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gardatrentino.it

Consorzio Pro Loco Valle di Ledro

Via Nuova 7
38067 Ledro (Pieve)
+39 0464 591222
vallediledro.com

The events of 1866 propelled the Austrians to reinforce the Upper Garda, to the extent that they made it virtually unassailable: Military works included the Ponale cutting, the forts at Tombio, Bellavista, San Nicolò and Garda, the Mezzo Battery, the Sant'Alessandro fort, the battery to the south of Brione, the Nago forts. Many forts and batteries were built on Monte Brione, now an excellent destination for fascinating walks, as are the recently restored upper Nago fort and the trenches at Bosco Caproni above Massone di Arco. Another interesting place to visit is MAG, Museo Alto Garda (museoaltogarda.it +39 0464 573869) in Riva del Garda which contains material on wartime events in the area. Other restored military facilities include the "Busa dei capitani" at Maza in Arco and parts of the first Austro-Hungarian front line between Nago and the Valle di Gresta.



Rovereto & Vallagarina

Gateway to the two most important towns in Trentino and transit route to the Alps, the Vallagarina was one of the major theatres of the 1915-1918 war in Italy. It is no coincidence, therefore, that the Museo Storico Italiano della Guerra was established here in Rovereto: a visit is recommended if you want to know more about the many aspects of the Great War. Ease of movement through the valley and the proximity to the Veneto plain to the south and the Tyrol to the north persuaded the Austro-Hungarian command to make plans to fortify the mountains surrounding the valley. At the outbreak of war, however, Forte Pozzacchio, an extraordinary fortification cut into the rock on a dominant promontory, was still incomplete; it is now in the final stages of restoration. A variety of defensive lines were built on the crests and the flanks of the surrounding mountains. Facing Forte Pozzacchio is the entrenched camp of Matassone at the foot of Monte Zugna, which is also the site of numerous Austro-Hungarian and Italian military works and artefacts, including the ruins of a hospital, trenches and, particularly noteworthy, the "Trincerone", the



**Azienda per il Turismo
Rovereto e Vallagarina**

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great Italian trench running along the crest, as well as the first Austrian lines, which have recently undergone extensive restoration. The northern side of the Vallarsa rises up to Monte Pasubio, where the landscape is dotted with military works, caves and trenches, which have been overhauled through the combined efforts of the provinces of Trento and Vicenza. The area is highly recommended for a day's hike, with the option of taking in another "site of remembrance", for example, Monte Testo or Corno Battisti. On the opposite side of the Vallagarina, separating the valley from Lake Garda, stands the imposing Monte Altissimo, where remains of the Italian defences can be seen: trenches, artillery emplacements and military roads. Monte Altissimo is part of the similarly war-torn Monte Baldo range, where there are now many possibilities for interesting walks: Dosso Casina, Malga Zures, Monte Vignola and Corno della Paura. In Val di Gresta, the entrenched camp of Nagià Grom near Manzano and the trenches of Monte Faè and Monte Creino are of interest.



Altipiani di Folgaria, Lavarone & Luserna

These days the scene is one of magnificent countryside, where expanses of forest pattern the undulating, verdant plateau. Yet between 1908 and 1914 - under the direction of General Franz Conrad von Hötzendorf - an imposing ring of fortifications took shape, designed for both defence and attack.

It was 28 km long and included seven strongholds in the area between Cima Vezzena and the higher reaches of Serrada. The so-called "Emperor's fortresses" are now open to the public and there are also some beautiful walks that pass the trenches, the remains of military buildings, the Costalta and Slaghenaufi cemeteries and the Austro-Hungarian military chapel of St. Zita at Passo di Vezzena.

The forts, each of which could house up to 300 soldiers, were constructed out of reinforced concrete with steel beams; the roofs were often over three metres thick, the facades were protected with armoured shields and they



**Azienda per il Turismo
Altipiani di Folgaria, Lavarone
e Luserna**

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folgariavaroneluserna.it

were equipped with rotating turrets for cannon and machine guns. The forts of Cherle, Sommo Alto and Dosso delle Somme defended the Folgaria area; those of Luserna, Verle and Cima Vezzena protected the north-eastern zone of the Altipiani; at Lavarone stands Forte Belvedere-Gschwent (fortebelvedere.org +39 0464 780005), "sentinel of the Val d'Astico", the most spectacular and well-preserved, thanks to the intervention of King Vittorio Emanuele III, who in the '30s saved it from steel salvagers. It now houses an interesting museum, which presents a historical narrative on the First World War through texts, images and artefacts. Forte Campo in Luserna has also undergone excavation work. Another museum well worth a visit is the Centro di Documentazione di Luserna (lusern.it +39 0464 789638), with its collection of texts, photos and films.



Lagorai & Valsugana

To the south lies the Valsugana, one of the most important lines of communication between the Veneto and Trento, to the north lies the Lagorai, a mountain range so vast and sparsely populated that it has preserved many traces of the war that was once waged there. Here, too, the war was anticipated before it was fought. Engineers did their best to protect the southern flank of the Empire with a series of pincer blockades. Forte Tenna, a few kilometres from Trento, and its twin on the Colle delle Benne, built between 1884 and 1890, were the final blockades of the Valsugana. Both have undergone restoration, which was completed in the summer of 2012, and are now open to the public. Trenches, defences and strongholds have all been restored as part of the large-scale excavations carried out in recent years on the Italian “Trincerone” (great trench) at Grigno, third and farthest line of defence against a potential Austro-Hungarian offensive.



**Azienda per il Turismo
Valsugana, Lagorai, Terme
e Laghi**

Villa Sissi Parco delle Terme 3
38056 Levico Terme
+39 0461 706101
visitvalsugana.it

**Consorzio Pro Loco
Valle dei Mocheni**

Loc. Pintarei 75/A
38050 Sant'Orsola Terme
+39 0461 551440
valledeimocheni.it

The trenches along the crests above the Valle dei Mocheni are well-known to hikers, who are often to be seen along their 19 km of length. The eastern Lagorai, which can be reached from Val di Fiemme or from the southern side, still bears the scars of the bloody battle for Monte Cauriol and there are many defensive structures on the surrounding peaks: from Cardinal to Valmaggioro, from Cima Cece to Colbricon and Passo Rolle.

Various cemeteries dot the landscape, including those at Malga Sorgazza, Monte Civerone and the Cimitero dei Caduti in Val Maora.

To gain a better understanding of the war in Valsugana and Lagorai a visit to the permanent exhibition La Grande Guerra in Valsugana e sul Lagorai (the Great War in Valsugana and Lagorai) in Borgo Valsugana is essential (*mostradiborgo.it* +39 0461 757195); for more on Lagorai there is the Museum of Caoria (*alpinicaoria.it* +39 349 7454543) and the collection of memorabilia in the Rifugio Cauriol (+39 348 5161123).



Val di Fiemme & Val di Fassa

Nowhere in the region did the events of the war so defy the impossible as in the Dolomites. The Austro-Hungarian command blockaded Paneveggio with Forte Buso and Forte Dossaccio (now under restoration), which guard the Valle del Trivignolo and Val di Fiemme on the road between Predazzo and Passo Rolle. In Val di Fassa no major works were put in place by the Imperial High Command, only Forte Moena was built to guard access to Passo San Pellegrino but was later turned into a military depot.

The onset of war, however, changed everything. First it was decided to evacuate the valley and to deploy troops at Passo San Lugano and Lake Carezza; later, and with the help of the German Alpenkorps, it was decided to occupy the mountain summits. There followed numerous encounters and battles, which did not result in any significant gains despite the soldiers' efforts in extremely hostile conditions. The many battle sites include Cima Bocche, Passo delle



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Val di Fiemme**

Via Fratelli Bronzetti 60
38033 Cavalese
+39 0462 241111
visitfiemme.it

**Azienda per il Turismo
Val di Fassa**

Strèda Roma 36
38032 Canazei
+39 0462 609500
fassa.com

**Azienda per il Turismo
San Martino di Castrozza,
Primiero e Vanoi**

Via Passo Rolle 165
38058 San Martino di Castrozza
+39 0439 768867
sanmartino.com

Selle, Cresta di Costabella and Marmolada with its "city of ice". Many interesting itineraries can be followed in these mountains, such as the trenches and tunnels of Costabella and Cima Bocche, although in this case you will need proper equipment and reasonable mountaineering experience; accessible to everyone, however, is the Fango area, which also features long stretches of trenches that cut through woods and pastures. Hundreds of metres of tunnels, caves and trenches can be seen on Punta Serauta on the Marmolada, an interesting excursion that can be combined with a visit to the Museo della Grande Guerra 1915-1918 at Passo Fedaia (+39 0462 601181 - +39 347 7972356). The Italian dugouts at Mesola on the Monte Padon mountain chain facing the Marmolada are also a spectacular sight. Another interesting museum exhibition is "Sul fronte dei ricordi" (Memories of the Front) at Someda (frontedeiricordi.it +39 334 8222082).



Trento and its surroundings

Trento played an extremely important role, both strategically and politically, in the defensive dispositions of South Tyrol. It is therefore understandable that the Austrian General Staff had always considered defence of the regional capital to be a priority. Military engineers were kept busy for over half a century, employed in building various works, now partially restored or cleaned up. Starting with the cutting at Bus de Vela, now open to the public, and the Doss di Sponde Blockhouse, both built between 1860 and 1861, they went on to fortify the Civezzano area at the opening to the Valsugana. This line was reinforced with forts at Dos Fornas, Brusaferrò and Maranza, while two batteries controlled Passo Cimirò. At the same time, attention also focussed on Bondone, where the Candrià battery and Mandolin Blockhouse were built, while the Forte di San Rocco and the batteries at Romagnano were entrusted with the task of controlling the Valle dell'Adige to the south. The northern flank of the Fortezza di Trento was to be protected by the Forte di Martignano. The last wave of military works, carried



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Valle dei Laghi**

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out at the turn of the century, included the Mattarello fortifications and the fort at Romagnano, while again on Bondone the barracks at Viotte, the military road, and fortifications and strongholds were built, even at the summit of Cornetto. Of course, we should not forget Doss Trento, which had always served as the city's bulwark, where there were batteries, an ammunition store and a barracks. Today it houses the Museo Nazionale Storico degli Alpini (National Museum of the Alpine Troops) (museonazionalealpini.it +39 0461 827248).

The Castello del Buonconsiglio was the central command of the entire system (buonconsiglio.it +39 0461 233770), and also held the military courtroom, the cells where irredentists Cesare Battisti, Fabio Filzi and Damiano Chiesa were imprisoned in 1916 and the Fossa della Cervara where they were hanged; these can still be seen today. Don't miss a visit to the Fondazione Museo storico del Trentino and the Gianni Caproni aeronautical museum (museocaproni.it +39 0461 944888) with its First World War aircraft.







Themed Walks & Hikes

The mountains: brutal and tragic for the soldiers, fascinating and unforgettable for enthusiasts and keen hikers. They were once the theatre of battles and military operations and now their powerful, natural environment holds traces of trenches, fortifications, mule tracks, and barracks that once housed thousands of soldiers during the Great War.

You can discover all this on a range of walks and hikes, some quite easy, others very challenging, sometimes requiring mountaineering experience, but in all cases there are advantages to seeking the help of an experienced guide.

To provide this help, the province's tourist offices, societies, cultural associations and local museums organise a series of tours every year with a historical expert. This gives an added value to discovering what remains - and much has



been salvaged and restored - of a front line that ran for 350 km from Ortles to the Marmolada, passing through the Presena and Adamello group, the Giudicarie and Valle di Ledro mountains, the peaks of south-eastern Trentino, Pasubio and the Altipiani di Folgaria, Lavarone & Luserna, as well as Lake Garda, Vallagarina, and the Fiemme, Fassa and Primiero valleys. Full details on these walks and hikes, including dates and itineraries, can be found on the website trentinograndeguerra.it



School trips

For years we have been teaching the young about the events of the Great War and keeping alive the memory of what happened then, thanks to close collaborations between museums and schools, and with projects designed specially for school children. There are now many educational activities organised by the various museums in Trentino bringing students and teachers together in workshops, exhibition visits, walks taking in trenches and monuments, as well as specific projects set up in collaboration with higher education teachers. This upsurge of projects also has the role of making the history of Trentino and its involvement in the First World War more accessible to the younger generation.



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www.visittrentino.it

GETTING TO TRENTINO

You can reach Trentino from the north or south by rail (Verona-Brenner-Munich line) or the A22 Brenner motorway.

The nearest airports to Trento are "Dolomiti S. Giacomo" in Bolzano (57 km), the "Valerio Catullo" in Verona (90 km), the "Gabriele d'Annunzio" in Brescia (135 km), the "Marco Polo" in Venice (163 km), the "Orio al Serio" in Bergamo (180 km) and the "Linate" and "Malpensa" airports in Milan (about 250 km).

Local transport includes bus services run by Trentino Trasporti and two branch railways, the Trento-Venice through Valsugana and the Trento-Malé serving Val di Non and Val di Sole.