

TRAVEL

Ski hard, then unwind in style

THE PERFECT BREAK

Alta Badia in the Dolomites is a beguiling blend of class and kitsch, says Lilian Hope

Why go...

Nestled against Austria in the northernmost part of Italy, the Italian Dolomites are home to one of the most chic ski regions in Europe – the six constellation towns of Alta

Badia. Less than two hours away by air and within 75 miles of Innsbruck and 125 miles from Venice, Alta Badia is short-break heaven, with more Michelin-starred restaurants per square metre than anywhere worldwide, long sweeping runs, and effusive, Italian hospitality and style mixed with Austrian kitsch. Frequenting by affluent Germans and well-heeled Italians, the region is trying to attract more British skiers – so go now before the bus-loads and university snowboarders.

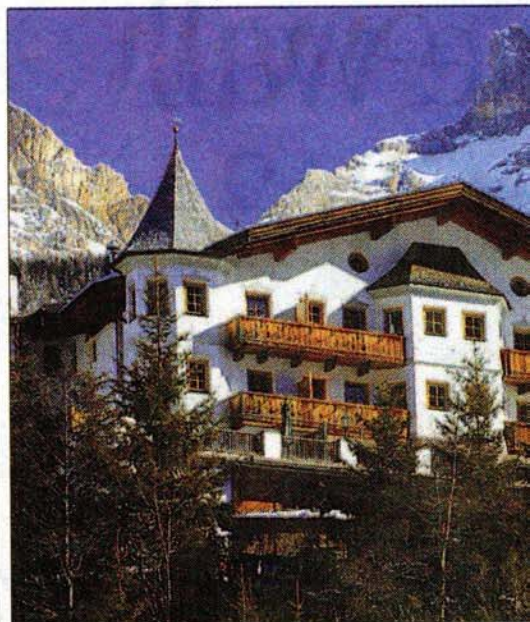
San Cassiano, a small, picturesque village towards the head of the valley, gives access to the Piz Sorega gondola, which transports you

to the top of the powdery pistes overlooking the pink blush of the Dolomites.

One of the most striking aspects of the area is the Ladino culture. It is the only place in Italy where this neo-Latin language is still spoken. Local fables make an enchanting addition to the experience – ask about the dragon of Sas dla Crusc and the nymph of Val de Misdé.

Travel by...

Plane: British Airways operates a year-round service to Innsbruck and Venice from London Gatwick, flying daily to Venice and up to five times a week to Innsbruck in winter (Tuesdays, Fridays, Saturdays



Rest your weary bones: the Hotel and Spa Rosa Alpina

and twice on Sundays.) Return fares (including tax) start at £69. To book, visit www.ba.com or call 0870 850 9850.

Transfers can be organised through your accommodation,

or go to www.altabadiadolomites.com. Independent bookings are feeling flush, arranged by helicopter (€1,500 from Innsbruck, €1,900 from Venice).

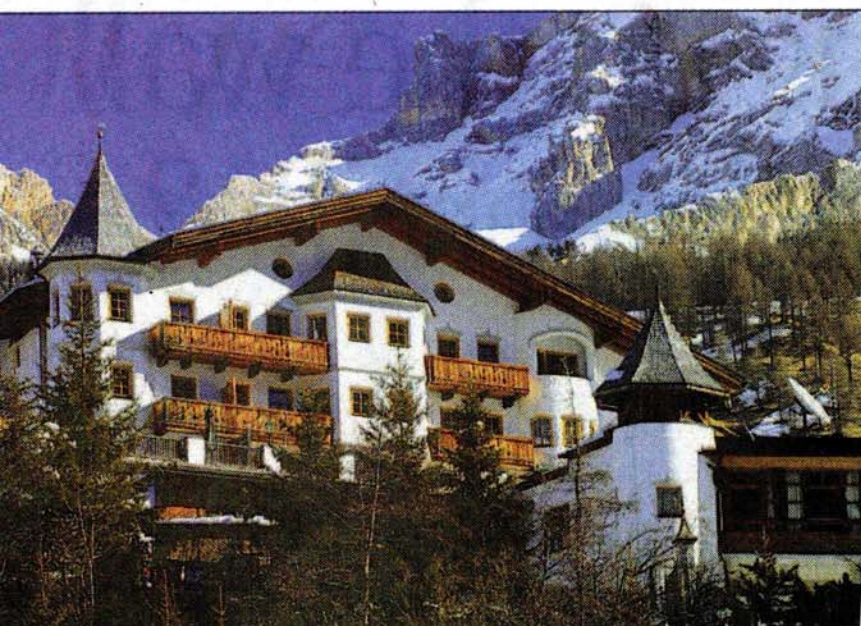
Sleep in...

Hotel and Spa Rosa Alpina is a family run since 1780, furnished with beautiful, ecclesiastical sculptures reclaimed from a local church and said to bring luck. Contemporary cowhorns. There are roaring fireplaces, boot warmers and wireless internet access, in a comfortable bedrock. Duck-down duvets and bathrooms, each in a different design and décor. To be your only opportunity to tell friends you've slept in the same bed as George Clooney who was a recent guest for a balcony, traditional stove, private garden. It's up to chance – you will be disappointed. Rooms from €315 per night; to book, call info@rosalpina.it or 0471 849500.

For those on a strict budget, try the intimate, family-owned Ciasaanteries at www.ciasaanteries.com per room per night.



Prepare for the piste Find the latest snow reports, with forecasts, powder alerts and webcams telegraph.co.uk/snowreports



our weary bones: the Hotel and Spa Rosa Alpina is one of the best in the region

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or go to www.altabada.org for independent bookings. If you are feeling flush, arrive in style by helicopter (starting at €1,500 from Innsbruck and €1,900 from Venice).

Sleep in...

Hotel and Spa Rosa Alpina, family run since 1780, furnished with beautiful ecclesiastical sculptures – reclaimed from a local church and said to bring luck – and contemporary cowhide chairs. There are roaring fires, ski-boot warmers and wireless internet access, in addition to comfortable bedrooms with duck-down duvets and huge bathrooms, each individual in design and décor. This could be your only opportunity to tell friends you've slept in the same bed as George Clooney, who was a recent guest. Ask for a balcony, traditional stove, private garden or leave it to chance – you won't be disappointed. Rooms from €315 per night; to book email info@rosalpina.it or call 00 39 0471 849500.

For those on a stricter budget, try the intimate, family-owned Ciasa Antersies, www.ciasaantersies.it (€150 per room per night), or Ciasa

Alexander, www.ciasa-alexander.it (from €68) for a great atmosphere and cosy rooms.

Lunch in...

Piz La Ila, for the best lobster pasta you'll ever taste this far from the sea. This mountain-top restaurant has breathtaking views from the terrace and is perfectly situated for non-skiers in your party to meet you, right at the top of the gondola (Piz Sorega). If decadence is your preference, ski to La Siriola restaurant (one Michelin star) in Hotel Ciasa Salares in nearby Armentarola. The staff are wonderfully accommodating (even providing straw hats if the sun is out) and the food is classic Italian at its best – the potato and Parma ham canapés are not to be missed. Carnivores will love Rifugio Scotoni, an authentic mountain restaurant that, after the arduous ski down "Death Valley", offers your choice of steak, chunky sausage or ribs sizzling on a hot plate and served up with potatoes and polenta.

Spend the day...

Skiing; with 130km of



grand affair with numerous courses and mesmerising wines. Ask for a tour of the cellar – an unforgettable experience that concludes at a "temple" where the 1968 Il Tempio Del Sassicaia vintage is worshipped. Alternatively, book at the St Hubertus in the Hotel Rosa Alpina, which received its second Michelin star last year under chef Norbert

Niederkofler. The tasting menu is highly recommended – including butternut squash *amuse bouche*, trout with potato and chive purée and a delicious pumpkin crème brûlée dessert. The sommelier's choice of regional wines complements the multitude of taste sensations. Less exotic but just as satisfying is a pizza in Rosa Alpina's Wine and Bar Grill, or a traditional fondue.

Recover at...

The Rosa Alpina's Daniela Steiner Spa. Padding around in a huge, complimentary dressing gown is the only way to relax after a day exposed to the elements. Choose from classic facials to volcanic wraps (treatments start at €35). The arnica massage, using arnica grown in surrounding meadows, is great for bruises, and all products are natural. Book treatments at the beginning of your stay because appointments run out fast. Alternatively, thaw out in the sauna, or stretch weary muscles with a few lengths in the beautiful Romanesque pool.

At all costs avoid...

Eating too much. With food this good, it's hard to resist, but try you must, if you don't want to be wedged in the chair lift by the end of your stay.

groomed pistes and access to another 500km of slopes, you'll be kept busy for at least a week. The longest run, Vallon-Corvara, is more than 4km, while for those who enjoy punishing themselves, there is 30km of cross-country terrain. Daredevils shouldn't leave without skiing the black Gran Risa, but for the most impressive runs don't miss the Lagazuoi area, nicknamed "Death Valley" by British skiers for the awesome surroundings. Contact details for ski-rental shops and ski lessons can be found on the tourist office website (www.altabada.org). Lift passes start at €30 a day.

Have dinner at...

A Michelin-starred restaurant – with so many on the doorstep, you simply have to indulge. Dining at La Stua de Michil, La Perla (www.hotel-laperla.it), is a