

Merano and environs

The Alpine-Mediterranean Way of Life

In Merano/Meran and its surrounding valleys, you can experience Alpine-Mediterranean nature and South Tyrolean culture. With its lush vegetation and mild climate, Merano represents the Mediterranean heart of the region.

As a **long-established spa town**, Merano offers an abundance of cultural and gastronomic choices of international standard. The coexistence of its **German and Italian speaking population** evolved a particular lifestyle that is reflected in daily life. Surrounded by majestic mountains and serene valleys, visitors starting out from Merano will soon find themselves in an authentic Alpine environment with its genuine hospitality amidst pristine nature. The Texelgruppe Nature Park, the Merano High Mountain Trail, five hiking and ski areas at different altitudes, provide visitors a variety of Alpine activities to choose from.

Mediterranean Merano

Situated in a valley basin, Merano is sheltered by the **Texelgruppe** mountain range to the north (with peaks rising up to 3,337 meters above sea level) and opens towards Bolzano/Bozen in the south. Due to its position, Merano enjoys a **mild microclimate all year round**. The contrasting background of **snow-covered mountaintops** and lush **Mediterranean vegetation in the parks** creates a unique atmosphere and makes Merano so appealing. This is best observable in the **Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle**, which received the “International Garden of the Year Award” in 2013 and are considered among the most magnificent botanical gardens in the world.

Merano’s reputation as a premium spa town derives from its unique climate and location in the mountains of **northern Italy**. Merano gained prominence among the European aristocracy following the sojourn of Empress **Elizabeth of Austria (Sissi)** at Trauttmansdorff Castle during the nineteenth century, eventually helping to consolidate South Tyrol’s position as an **international holiday destination**. Nowadays, Merano’s historic charm merges with its urban lifestyle. The magnificent old Art Nouveau building, the Kurhaus, blends with the modern **Terme Merano** (Merano’s thermal baths), designed by the famous architect Matteo Thun. The colorful and diverse flora and fauna can be admired during walks along the promenade dating back over a century ago. Italian fashion outlets and typical gourmet delicatessens are plentiful throughout the town center.

Merano’s role as the region’s cultural center has remained unaltered over time and both visitors and locals have a rich selection of cultural events to choose from all year round. Among them: the Südtirol Classic Festival - Music Weeks Merano, featuring world famous classical orchestras, the prestigious Garden Nights - World Music Festival in the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle, the Südtirol Jazz Festival Alto Adige, the Merano WineFestival, as well as the horse races on one of the best known courses in Italy.

In the immediate vicinity of Merano there are localities and uncontaminated mountain valleys steeped in tradition.

The historical urban centres around Merano include Scena/Schenna, Tirolo/Dorf Tirol (with the famous Tyrol Castle), Avelengo/Hafling (renowned for the Haflinger horses), Nalles/Nals, Tesimo/Tisens (boasting the world’s largest and oldest working vineyard), Lana (home to the biggest apple orchards in Europe), Marlengo/Marling, Parcines/Partschins (where the typewriter was invented), Lagundo/Algund and Naturno/Naturns, (site of the oldest frescoes in German-speaking Europe).

As one of the three valleys in the region, the **Passeiertal valley** lies to the north of Merano and at one end of the valley, there are the Jaufenpass and Timmelsjoch mountain passes leading towards

Austria. The Passeiertal valley is at the center of the Texelgruppe Nature Park and is the birthplace of Andreas Hofer, the 18th century Tyrolean patriot. Microbreweries, the production of organic Alpine cheese, pig and goat farming, all characterize the Passeiertal valley. In 2014, the valley was the chosen location for the German national team's retreat, before winning the Football World Cup in Brazil.

In 1991, the **Schnalstal valley** hit the headlines when Ötzi, the ancient ice mummy, was discovered lying in a glacier. There is a large network of sign-posted hiking trails, at various difficulty levels leading up to the Weißkugel Mountain, the highest peak in the region at 3,738 meters above sea level. Every year, famous professional skiers from all over the world choose the Schnalstal valley for their training, since it provides them with the best conditions. The traditional annual transhumance (declared a UNESCO Intangible Cultural Heritage) creates a truly impressive spectacle when a massive flock of 3,000 sheep crosses into the valley from the Ötztal valley to the South Tyrolean Alps.

Just south of Merano, the **Ultental valley** and the **Deutschnonsberg area** branch out to the southwest. As one of the oldest inhabited valleys in South Tyrol, the Ultental valley is still mainly populated by farmers and artisans. This is also the location of the characteristic old houses with shingle roofs made of millennial larches, the oldest pines in Europe. The valley is renowned for its skilled artisans, carpenters, organic bread and fine wool.

Outdoor activities, relaxation, food and wine

Merano and its environs provide the ideal all year round holiday conditions for those in search of relaxation and outdoor activities. The varied landscape is ideal for **hiking, mountaineering and climbing** and there is an extensive network of **cycle tracks** for mountain biking enthusiasts. Both beginners and more experienced **hikers** can choose from a variety of itineraries such as the **Waalwege** trails (old irrigation channel trails), the **Merano High Mountain Trail**, considered one of the most beautiful trails in the Alps that encircles the **Texelgruppe Nature Park**, as well as the E5 European long distance path.

There are five winter sports areas near Merano: **Merano 2000**, in close proximity to the town, the rural **Schwemmalm in the Ultental valley**, the small and romantic **Vigiljoch in Lana** and the idyllic **Pfelders in Passeiertal valley**. Those in search of challenges will certainly find them on the **Schnalstal Glacier**. The pristine nature in the area is there to be explored at any time during a ski touring excursion, cross-country skiing or snowshoeing trip. Even more demanding sporting challenges lie in store for those contemplating ice climbing, ice rafting and paragliding.

After a strenuous day in the outdoors, a number of hotels provide an abundance of health and relaxation treatments. Treatments based on natural therapies and local ingredients are among the most popular, from the hay or whey baths, rejuvenating grape massages and peeling treatments with apples. The **Terme Merano** is the main public spa and recreation center with its large 5-hectare park, saunas and swimming pools, thermal inhalations systems and natural treatments. It also has a therapy center for preventive medicine.

Active sportspeople can indulge in the gastronomic delights on offer without remorse: this is where the Tyrolean and Central European culinary tradition meets the Italian Mediterranean cuisine. **The starters and pasta dishes** are part of the daily South Tyrolean cuisine as much **as the typical traditional South Tyrolean dishes**. There are all kinds of garnished **dumplings** as well as pastries made of egg and flour, including authentic **apple strudel and Kaiserschmarren**. The restaurants have a rich menu to choose from, ranging from traditional home cooking to 5-star cuisine while the taverns at the **Alpine hut** serve delicious homemade dishes. Locally sourced, sustainable and seasonal products form the basis of the South Tyrolean cuisine. Enjoy a glass of wine to round off



the culinary experience. There are more than 25 South Tyrolean varietals, **high-quality wines** from numerous wineries and internationally acclaimed wine estates.

www.merano-suedtirol.it