



**The winter season 2019-20**

## **UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE DOLOMITES**

**UNESCO declared the DOLOMITES a “World Heritage Site.”**

**On 26th June 2009, UNESCO** included these calcite mountains located in north eastern Italy on its list of the most beautiful landscapes in the world. By this action, the United Nations has officially recognized, through its organization for education, science and culture, the unique nature of the Dolomites. Now the Dolomites, with their famous peaks, including Marmolada (3,342 m), the Three Peaks of Lavarredo (2,999 m), Averau (2,649 m), Sciliar (2,563 m), the Pale di San Martino (3,192 m) and Mount Pelmo (3,169 m) to name just a few, will take their rightful place among the most beautiful mountains in the world.

**Since time immemorial the DOLOMITES have charmed humanity**

**Dino Buzzati Traverso** (1906-1972), a writer, journalist and painter originally from Belluno, loved the mountains and particularly the Dolomites, in whose shadow he was born and raised. Almost all his best-known writings were influenced by this passion. As a painter, Dino Buzzati was able to express his great admiration for the calcite mountains of northeast Italy, painting, for example, the **Duomo of Milan** in the form of a **dolomite mountain** – jagged, full of spires and sharply pointed towers.

The great writer from Vicenza **Mario Rigoni Stern** (1921-2008), known to his readers as the “the Sergeant”, was one of the first to sign the 1993 manifesto of the Mountain Wilderness environmental association, which sought the recognition of the Dolomites as a “World Monument”. In an open letter addressed to schools in the Veneto Region, Mario Rigoni Stern, speaking of the beauty of the mountain landscape and its great value, wrote, “**Did you know that we have the most beautiful mountains on Earth right here? They are the Dolomites.**”

Scientifically speaking, as early as the 18th century the mountains, because of their characteristic colourful rock stratifications and because of their countless fossils of prehistoric animals, became a favourite area for researchers. The area drew geologists, experts in mineralogy and the best-known geographers of the time, from around the world. They were the ones who analysed the unique quality of the mountains’ rock composition and began to study the development of these imposing, jagged mountains that are light in colour and sometimes reddish as well. The Italian scientist **Giovanni Arduino** (1714–1795), the French **Déodat de Dolomieu** (1750–1801) and the German **Alexander von Humboldt** (1769–1859) are only some of the well-known scientists who have studied the Dolomites at close range. Déodat de Dolomieu was the one who, in 1790, analysed the mineral and chemical composition of dolomite rock. Since that time it has been called “dolomite.” In 1864, the British painter Josiah Gilbert and another Englishman and naturalist, George Churchill, published a report on their voyage titled “The Dolomite Mountains”. The name, however, didn’t stick until after World War I, when the territory became part of the Kingdom of Italy.

### **THE DOLOMITES – for many, the most beautiful mountains in the world**

Toward the end of the 19th century, the Dolomites saw numerous pioneering activities; the mountains were an excellent area for experimentation of various kinds. Bold British noblemen were the first to conquer the sharp peaks, the jagged summits and the sheer cliffs of the Dolomites. They were followed by Hapsburg climbers who wrote the most important chapters in the history of Dolomite mountain climbing.

Great climbers like the Viennese **Paul Grohmann** (1838–1908), the first to climb to the top of Tofana de Rozes and Mount Cristallo near Cortina d’Ampezzo, the Sassolungo in Val Gardena and the Three Peaks of Lavarredo in the Sesto Dolomites, loved these mountains and wrote about them in numerous publications. The Austrian **Emil Zsigmondy** (1861–1885) was also a pioneer in the history of Dolomite mountain climbing. He described them as a “delicious gem in the Alps”. The Lake Garda mountain climber, actor, and movie director **Luis Trenker** (1892-1990), who was born in Ortisei at the foot of the inimitable Sassolungo, documented his passion for these mountains in numerous books and films, which became

known worldwide. Thanks to Trenker, the rocky shapes of the Dolomites became known for the first time on an international level. Finally there is the “king of the eight-thousanders,” **Reinhold Messner**. Since childhood he has loved the Dolomites. From the window of his house in Val di Funes he could admire the Odle Mountains and may have understood from the start that the mountains would always be with him. Messner has conquered all the highest mountains on the planet, but there has always been a soft spot in his heart for the Dolomites: “They are not the highest, but they are certainly the most beautiful mountains in the world”.

Majestic cliffs, tall sharp peaks, impossible overhangs and jagged summits. The variety of forms and colours and of the valleys that cross the Dolomites, however, have not only charmed the great mountain climbers of history, but great artists as well. **Le Corbusier** (Switzerland-France 1887–1965), perhaps the greatest contemporary architect, saw in the Dolomites “the most beautiful natural architecture in the world”.

### **The DOLOMITES – UNESCO World Heritage Site**

**UNESCO**, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, maintains a worldwide list of protected natural paradises and cultural treasures that are considered to be of particular value to future generations. In recent years the organization has evaluated the candidacy of the Dolomites as a Natural World Heritage Site. This effort has had the support of the five Italian provinces of Bolzano, Trento, Belluno, Udine and Pordenone, over whose territory the Dolomites extend, for a specific purpose: **to obtain this prestigious recognition from UNESCO.**

The **IUCN** (International Union for Conservation of Nature) was commissioned by UNESCO to assess the compatibility of the characteristics of the Dolomites with the criteria for admission as a Natural World Heritage Site. The result? The Dolomites are unique in terms of geology, biology and scenery and therefore are unlike any other mountains on Earth. The IUCN stated that “***The Dolomites are generally considered to have some of the most beautiful mountain scenery in the world, even though they don’t have the highest peaks or the largest glaciers.***” It was their esthetic properties, extraordinary beauty, unique geographic properties and the abundance of their flora, with more than 2,400 diverse species, that convinced the IUCN commission. In its concluding report, the IUCN proposed that UNESCO add the Dolomites to its list of top natural sites. **At its 33rd annual congress in Seville on 26th June, 2009, UNESCO declared the Dolomites a World Heritage Site.** The Dolomites are now listed as boasting one of the **57** most beautiful scenic areas in Europe, and one of **229** worldwide.

Thanks to the existence of vast natural parks, national parks and Natura 2000 protected zones, which have preserved the central areas of the Dolomites for decades, UNESCO has

granted these mountains the designation of Natural World Heritage Site. These areas include the group formed by Mounts Pelmo and Croda da Lago (Veneto Region); the Marmolada; the group formed by the Pale di San Martino, Pale di San Lucano and Belluno Dolomites; the group formed by the Friuli Dolomites and the Oltre Piave; the Northern Dolomites, located between Alto Adige and Veneto, including the Cadini, the Sesto Dolomites, the Ampezzo Dolomites, the Fanes, Senes and Braies Dolomites and the Puez-Odle Group; the group formed by Sciliar, Catinaccio and Latemar, bridging Alto Adige and Trentino; the Brenta Dolomites, the westernmost, all in the Trentino region; and the Bletterbachschlucht, an extraordinary canyon, unique in the world, with multicoloured rock stratifications and countless prehistoric animal fossils. The entire area is 142,000 hectares, with an additional buffer zone of more than 90,000 hectares.

The **buffer zones** have been used for a number of decades by UNESCO as a way to provide external protection to the central Natural World Heritage Site areas. In this strip of land construction, infrastructure and urbanization activities that might compromise the integrity of the central areas are curtailed or prohibited. For example, there are restrictions on the height of buildings and the width of streets. In the specific case of the Dolomites, the IUCN stated in its concluding report that like the central areas **98 percent** of the buffer zone areas located in **protected natural reserves**.

Worldwide, **229** scenic areas are on the **UNESCO List of World Heritage Sites**. In Italy, the Dolomites are the second area of this type, joining the Aeolian Islands, which were added to the list in 2000.

### **The DOLOMITES: once tropical atolls, today majestic mountains**

Warm, shallow turquoise water, coral reefs, multicoloured fish, shellfish, white beaches. This is a perfect description of a Caribbean atoll – but also of the Dolomites, which had their origins in a prehistoric **tropical sea**.

About **250 million years ago**, the present-day arc of the Alps was part of the continent Pangea, which was located far to the south, in the Earth's tropical zone. Given the presence of mollusks, algae, coral and fish, this area saw massive limestone production. Due to volcanic activity and the consequent outpouring of basaltic magma, these organisms died off on a massive scale and were deposited on the seabed. This is why today the Dolomites are a paradise for fossil researchers. Tectonic activity lifted the seabed, the primordial ocean slowly receded and the first Dolomites began to surface. The movement of the earth's plates lifted the mountain chain, sandstone hardened thanks to the high calcareous content, and was compressed by enormous pressure from the geological layers above it. Following the Ice Age the surface of the Dolomites began to be formed, and **water proved to be a skillful**

**and imaginative sculptor.** Landslides and detritus flowed into valleys, as wind, rain and ice continued their inexorable work, so that the Dolomites change on a yearly basis.

One of the marvels to emerge from the unique mineralogical composition of the Dolomites is undoubtedly the phenomenon known as “**Enrosadira**”. The presence of calcium carbonate and manganese in the dolomite causes the mountains to glow with an intense red colour at sunset. The rocky cliffs cover the spectrum of colours from bright yellow to fiery red and then soften to shades of violet until they disappear into the total darkness of night. Enrosadira is unique to the Dolomites and is definitely one of nature’s most spectacular sights.

### **THE DOLOMITES in myth and legend**

The appearance of these unusual mountains of northeast Italy is constantly changing, offering the visitor new views at every turn. For this reason the Dolomites have always inspired myths and legends.

The unusual shapes of the Dolomites and their ever-changing colours have fired the imagination of those who live here for thousands of years. Is it possible to travel through these mountains without seeing faces in the rocks, caves and caverns, inhabited perhaps by *Salvans* (cave dwellers) or by *Ganes* (woodland fairies)? The centuries have given rise to all kinds of legends, which tell of dwarf kings (King Laurino), warriors and princesses, of alliances between humans and marmots, of the decline and return of mysterious mountain kingdoms. **Karl Felix Wolff** (1879-1966) collected and wrote down these legends in 1913, thus saving them from oblivion.

### **Skiing in the DOLOMITES “World Heritage Site” – with DOLOMITI SUPERSKI**

Is there a reason why, as early as the first years of the 19th century, the Dolomites were the staging area for the first skiing experiments in Europe? These pioneers, who came primarily from Anglo-Saxon and Germanic backgrounds, immediately responded to the beauty of these mountains, the suitability of their gentle slopes for skiing and the magical atmosphere surrounding them. Thanks to their vision, the alliance between the Dolomites and winter sports continues to the present day, now that the Dolomites are a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The experience of discovering one of the most beautiful mountain landscapes in the world on skis is priceless.

Internationally recognized trails, such as Saslong and Gran Risa, or spectacular panoramic views at the summit of Lagazuoi (2,800 m), Sass Pordoi (2,950 m), Marmolada (3,342 m) and Cristallo/Forcella Staunies (2,930 m), all reachable by cablecar or skilift, offer breathtaking winter views of the snow-covered Dolomites. The same can be said of other, less well-known trails in the 12 ski areas of the Dolomites. Thanks to Dolomiti Superski it is

possible to ski from one valley to the next, traveling the trails and enjoying the beautiful Alpine landscape, almost touching the vividly coloured rocks – a powerful and unique experience enhanced by your encounter with the stone giants and an idea that seems like a dream: **“I am skiing in the heart of a UNESCO World Heritage Site.”**

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