

Alta Via de Merano Loop (9 legs) (NW of Merano, Italy)

We're staying at **Hotel Wein Garten** (Naturns/Naturno) at the *south* end of the loop.
I also have reservations at **Gasthof Bruggstein** in **Moos** (at the *north* end of the loop).

Day #1: Begin with legs #7-#8

- **Leg 7:** Bus/car from **Naturno** (15 minutes) and start hike in the **village of Monte Santa Catarina** in the lower Val Senales. (leg 7 = ~8km)
- **Leg 8:** continues across northern route through Passo Gelato to **Rifugio Petrarca (stay in hut)** (~12km)

Day #2: Continue with Leg 9: high mountains down to the **Val di Plan** at the **Ausserhütt** farm (between Moso in Passiria and **Plan**). (~15km)

- Stay in Moos (**Gasthof Bruggstein**)

Day #3: Moos → continue with **Legs 1 and 2**. Then hike out to **Rifiano** & bus to Naturno.

Day #4: Bus to Rifiano. Cont **Legs 3 and 4**. Hike out to **Giggelberg**. Bus back to Naturno.

Day #5: Bus to Giggelberg → continue with **Legs 5 and 6**. Ends up back in Naturno.

Stage 7: Monte S. Caterina - Casera di Fuori

From the Val Senales into the Val di Fosse, crossing the...

Stage 8: Casera di Fuori - Passo Gelato

This impressive stage of the northern Alta Via di Merano leads...

Stage 9: Rifugio Petrarca - Plan

The last stage of the Alta Via di Merano leads us from the high...

Stage 1: Ausserhütt - Ulvas - Montaccio

From the shady coniferous forests in the Val di Plan to Ulvas,...

Stage 2: Montaccio - Vernurio

Hiking along the sunny slopes of the Val Passiria, passing the...

Stage 3: Vernurio - Masi della Muta

From Vernurio and Gaveis to the Longfall mountain hut in the Val...

Stage 4: Leiter Alm - Giggelberg

Rifugio del Valico, Malga di Tablà, Hohe Wiese, Valle Ziel,...

Stage 5: Giggelberg - Unterstell

From Giggelberg to Unterstell above the village of Naturno,...

Stage 6: Unterstell - Monte S. Caterina

Hiking across the steep slopes high above the Val Senales,...

We'll begin with **Leg #7-#** (bus/car from Naturno, from where we're staying)

Leg 7: Monte Santa Caterina --> Casera di Fuori

- From the Val Senales into the Val di Fosse, **crossing the beautiful nature park of the Tessa mountain group**.

Start hiking tour in the **village of Monte Santa Catarina** in the lower Val **Senales**, which we have **reached by bus from Naturno**. Following trail no. 28 towards **Nasereit**, crossing the beautiful green meadows above Monte Santa Catarina, we finally reach trail no. 24, the Alta Via di Merano.

We hike gently upwards towards north, through a dense larch wood. Having passed some beautiful mountain farms, the trail gets narrower and leads us into the forest again, along cliffy rocks and across steep meadows, up and down several stone steps, until we finally reach the large meadow above the Tumlhof farm, from where the trail branches off to the right into the Val di Fosse.

Consequently, the trail leads us through another larch wood and crosses some streams until it reaches the area around the Nasereit farm, where the valley gets wider and greener. Hiking across the steep slopes of the Val di Fosse along a small brook, we pass the plague chapel and finally reach the beautiful alpine pastures of **Casera di Fuori** (1700m). From here, continue to Leg 8. OR bail out → ~~get back to the valley by the taxi shuttle which we have ordered in advance.~~

Starting point: Monte Santa Catarina in the Val Senales (**by BUS from Naturno**).

Trail route: Monte Santa Catarina - Nasereit - Casera di Fuori in the Val di Fosse, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 3 h

Length: 8 km

Altitude difference (ascent): 650 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 190 metres

More information: tourist board Val di Senales, phone +39 0473 679148

Leg 8: Casera di Fuori --> Passo Gelato

- **This impressive stage of the northern Alta Via di Merano leads across the 2,879 m high Passo Gelato.**

We **continue our tour at Casera di Fuori**, an idyllic alpine pasture at 1,700 m asl and follow trail no. 24 (and A8) towards the upper Val di Fosse. Having passed the Rableid Alm mountain hut (2,004 m asl) we follow a broad hiking trail to the Eishof farm (2,081 m asl), which lies about 2 km away. On our left we enjoy the beautiful panorama of the mountains Rote Spitze (3,393 m asl), Fanatspitze (3,358 m asl), Karlesspitze (3,462 m asl), Falschungspitze (2,981 m asl) and Bankkogel (3,311 m asl), whereas on our right there are the high peaks of the Tessa mountain group and behind us the famous Mount Similaun (3,599 m asl).

Having passed the Eishof farm we continue our tour towards the upper Val di Fosse and enjoy the impressive view of Mount Altissima (3,482 m asl) at the end of it. The broad hiking path leads us through a small larch forest before it transforms itself into a narrower and steeper trail. We cross the small Val di Fosse stream several times and pass some small waterfalls, enjoying the warming sun and the silent and idyllic nature around us.

Soon we reach a signpost, which leads us up on a stony trail to Passo Gelato at 2,879 m asl, while we enjoy the view of the mountains Cima Bianca Grande and Cima Bianca Piccola on our right. The last section is rather steep and difficult. However, arrived at the highest point, we enjoy a beautiful view towards north-east. Right in front of us we see **Rifugio Petrarca** (offers overnight lodging) and its beautiful emerald green mountain lake, on our left Mount Altissima (3,481 m asl) and behind us the beautiful Val di Fosse. We walk down to the Rifugio Petrarca at 2,875 m asl, where we enjoy a tasty lunch.

Please note: the asphalted road leads until Casera di Fuori (parking space subject to a charge of approx. 3 Euros). *Rifugio Petrarca offers overnight accommodation. When you plan to do this stage of the Alta Via di Merano, please inform yourselves on the conditions of the trails at Rifugio Petrarca!*

Starting point: Casera di Fuori (1,975 m asl)

Trail route: Casera di Fuori - Rableid Alm - Eishof farm - Passo Gelato - Rifugio Petrarca, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 4.5 h

Length: 12 km

Altitude difference (ascent): 1,220 metres

More information: Rifugio Petrarca, phone +39 0473 646789

Leg 9: Rifugio Petrarca → Plan (up valley from Moos)

- The last stage of the Alta Via di Merano leads us from the high mountains down to the Val di Plan.

From the Rifugio Petrarca, we hike downwards through a rocky, partly snow-covered landscape. After a steep zigzag descent we cross another rocky landscape, formed by retreating glaciers. Since we are getting closer to an altitude of 2,000 m asl, the meadows turn greener and greener. Another zigzag trail leads us down to the Lazins alpine pasture.

From here, an easier forest road leads us to the hamlets of Lazins and Zeppichl until we finally reach the **small village of Plan**. Having passed the mountain station of the Grünboden cable car, we follow the small brook towards east. Several waterfalls are running down on the northern side of the valley, transporting snowmelt into the valley brook. Part of this section of the Alta Via di Merano leads along the winter toboggan run. Arrived at the valley bottom, the trail leads quite gently along the **main road from Moso to Plan**.

At the Ausserhütt farm the Alta Via di Merano branches off into the forest, leading towards Ulfas. However, our adventurous hiking tour on the Alta Via di Merano **ends here in Ausserhütt**, (between Moos in Passiria and Plan).

Starting point: Rifugio Petrarca (2,875 m asl)

Trail route: Rifugio Petrarca - Lazins - Plan - Ausserhütt, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 4 h

Length: 15 km + hike

Altitude difference (ascent): 50 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 1,475 metres

More information: tourist board Val Passiria, phone +39 0473 656188

Leg 1: Ausserhütt --> Ulvas --> Montaccio

- From the shady coniferous forests in the Val di Plan to Ulvas, Cresta and Montaccio and finally to the sunny meadows above San Martino in Passiria.

Ulvas divides the Alta Via di Merano into its northern and southern parts. However, we start our first stage in **Ausserhütt** between Plata and Plan in the upper Val Passiria, since Ulvas has no own bus station. We hike gently upwards on a forest road following signpost no. 24, before a narrow trail leads us into the coniferous forest. Time and time again we may enjoy very nice views of the Val di Plan, Corvara and the Stubai Alps. Crossing a small stream over a wooden bridge, we soon afterwards reach the village of **Ulvas** on a forest road.

Passing the small church of Ulvas, we enter into the forest again and cross several small streams before we finally reach an asphalted road which leads us to Cresta. In the restaurant Gasthof Christl we enjoy a tasty cold snack and a great view of the Val Passiria.

Continuing our hiking tour, we follow the same road before we reach a narrow trail which leads us through the forest along the sunny side of the Tessa mountain group and finally to **Montaccio**. After about 12 km and 3.5 hours of walking we decide to hike downwards to **San Martino** (approx. 3 km and one hour of walking).

Starting point: Ausserhütt (between Moso in Passiria and Plan)

Trail route: Ausserhütt - Ulvas - Cresta - Montaccio, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 4 h (+ 1 h for the descent to San Martino)

Length: 12.8 km (+ 2.5 km for the descent to San Martino)

Altitude difference (ascent): 410 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 810 metres until Montaccio, from Montaccio to San Martino 450 metres

More information: tourist board Val Passiria, phone +39 0473 656188

Leg 2: Montaccio --> Vernurio

- Hiking along the sunny slopes of the Val Passiria, passing the small localities of Montaccio, Valclava, Magdfeld and Vernurio and enjoying the great view of Mount Punta Cervina.

To reach the starting point of this 12 km long stage of the Alta Via di Merano we first have to follow trail no. 7 from **San Martino up to Montaccio**, which takes us just a bit more than an hour.

Trail no. 24 first leads us on a small asphalted road and later on several forest and hiking trails (with some steps). Passing some beautiful farm houses, we hike through Valclava and finally upwards again towards Magdfeld. After a short rest at the mountain restaurant in **Magdfeld** we continue our tour across meadows, forests and ravines. Some steep sections are secured by handrails. However, a good physical fitness is recommended. On a rather broad trail we finally reach **Vernurio**, which offers several restaurants as well as some nice views of the surrounding mountain panorama.

From Vernurio back down to the Val Passiria one can either *hike on trail no. 5 towards Rifiano* or take the **bus, which**

runs every hour down to Caines, Tirol and Rifiano.

Starting point: Montaccio above San Martino in Passiria, reachable from San Martino on trail no. 7 in about 1 hour of hiking

Trail route: Montaccio-Magdfeld-Vernurio, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 3.5 h (+ 1 h for the ascent from San Martino)

Length: 11 km (+ 2.5 km for the ascent from San Martino)

Altitude difference (ascent): 625 metres (+ 450 metres from San Martino to Montaccio)

Altitude difference (descent): 600 metres

Leg 3: Vernurio --> Masi della Muta

- From Vernurio and Gaveis to the Longfall mountain hut in the Val di Sopranes to the Masi della Muta Alta above the village of Tirol.

Vernurio, the starting point of this stage of the Alta Via di Merano, can be easily reached by bus from Tirol or Caines. From the bus station in Vernurio, we take trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano) towards Gaveis/Longfall, which leads on several narrow hiking trails and sometimes along the asphalted road. Passing Gaveis, we hike gently downwards to the Val di Sopranes until after about 90 minutes we reach the Longfall mountain hut.

After a short break at the Longfall mountain hut, we hike up the other side of the Val di Sopranes. With its steep and **partly rope-secured sections** this trail is one of the most challenging of the Alta Via di Merano and requests some attention and a decent physical fitness. Finally, heading towards the famous farm houses Masi della Muta above Tirol, we first reach the Talbauer mountain restaurant and then the mountain station of the cable car leading to the village of **Tirol**.

From here, we can either take the cable car to Tirol or continue our hiking tour towards the Leiter Alm mountain hut.

Starting point: Vernurio above Rifiano, in summer and early autumn reachable by bus from Tirol and Caines/Rifiano

Trail route: Vernurio-Longfall mountain hut-Masi della Muta, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 3 h

Length: 8 km

Altitude difference (ascent): 700 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 420 metres

More information: tourist board Tirol, phone +39 0473 923314

Leg 4: Leiter Alm --> Giggelberg

- Rifugio del Valico, Malga di Tablà, Hohe Wiege, Valle Ziel, Giggelberg: on this stage we explore Monte Sole above Lagundo and Parcines.

From **Plars di Mezzo** near **Lagundo** we take the chair lift to **Velloi** and from there the old basket lift, which takes us up to the Leiter Alm mountain hut. From here, we follow a stony trail to the Rifugio del Valico, which lies in a beautiful forest clearing and is the starting point of several high alpine tours to the peaks of the Tessa mountain group.

Continuing our hiking tour on trail no. 24 towards west we reach the view point called Hohe Wiege (High Cradle), where we enjoy the beautiful panorama of the Val Passiria with Mount Punta Cervina and Mount Ivigna, the Val d'Adige, the Val Venosta and the snow-capped peaks of the Tessa mountain group.

At the Malga di Tablà we make a short rest before we head towards the Rifugio Nasereit (closed in 2010) in the Valle Ziel, extending from Parcines into the Tessa mountain group. At the western side of the valley we hike upwards to the farm

houses of Giggelberg and the mountain station of the new Funivia Texel, which finally takes us down to **Rablà/Parcines**. This fourth stage of the Alta Via di Merano is quite exhausting but very interesting and varied, offering a lot of great views of the surroundings.

Starting point: Leiter Alm mountain hut above Lagundo/Velloi, **reachable by chair lift/basket lift from Plars di Mezzo/Velloi**

Trail route: Leiter Alm - Rifugio del Valico - Malga di Tablà - Nasereit - Giggelberg, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 4 h

Length: 12 km

Altitude difference (ascent): 700 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 650 metres

More information: tourist board Lagundo, phone +39 0473 448600

Leg 5: Giggelberg --> Unterstell

- From Giggelberg to Unterstell above the village of Naturno, crossing the so-called "Valley of Thousand Steps".

From **Rablà** we **take the Funivia Texel cable car up to Giggelberg**, the starting point of this stage of the Alta Via di Merano. Hiking westwards through the valley of the Schindelbach stream we reach the beautiful old Hochforch farm under the Orenknott mountain and the Orenalm alpine pasture.

From here, we head towards the Brunnen valley und the Lahnbach valley, the so-called "Valley of Thousand Steps" (even though they are "only" 987). The trail leads us down the ravine and up to the other side of the valley. With its beautiful waterfalls this section is particularly adventurous.

After quite an exhausting ascent from the ravine, we finally reach the meadows and farms on the beautiful Monte Sole. Some of the farms offer cold and warm dishes. Having passed the farms Grubhof, Galmein and Innerforch, we follow trail no. 24B to the mountain station of the **Unterstell cable car, which takes us down to the village of Naturno**. On this *fifth stage of the Alta Via di Merano we got to know the wild nature of the Tessa mountain group*.

Starting point: Giggelberg above Parcines (reachable by the Funivia Texel cable car from Rablà)

Trail route: Giggelberg - Unterstell, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 3 h

Length: 8.7 km

Altitude difference (ascent): 450 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 700 metres

More information: tourist board Parcines, phone +39 0473 967157

Leg 6: Unterstell --> Monte S. Caterina

- Hiking across the steep slopes high above the Val Senales, passing some beautiful mountain farms.

We reach the starting point of this stage of the Alta Via di Merano by **taking the Unterstell cable car leading from Naturno to Monte Sole** and hiking from its mountain station to the Patleldhof and Linthof farms on trails no. 10A and 10. From here, the Alta Via di Merano branches off into the Val Senales, offering beautiful views of the Val Venosta and Reinhold Messner's Juval castle.

Having passed the mountain restaurant Innerunterstell we hike steeply downwards for a short time before the trail continues on the western slopes of the Val Senales, some of which are very steep and still today can be only mowed by hand. The beautiful old mountain farms and cottages and some little chapels fit harmoniously into the landscape.

We continue our hiking tour towards the village of Monte Santa Catarina, enjoying the beautiful panorama of the white peaks of the Oetztal Aps and the glacier of the Val Senales. On trail no. 10A we reach Monte Santa Caterina, from where we **take the bus back to Naturno**.

Starting point: Unterstell above Naturno (reachable by the “Naturns-Sonnenberg-Unterstell” cable car)

Trail route: Unterstell - Monte Santa Catarina, trail no. 24 (Alta Via di Merano)

Walking time: approx. 2.5 h

Length: 7 km

Altitude difference (ascent): 370 metres

Altitude difference (descent): 430 metres

More information: tourist board Naturno, phone +39 0473 666077
