

Hotels and other matters

Hotels

For every hotel, *albergo* and *pensione* I saw in 1953 you could safely multiply the total by 20 today. Travelling in 'low season' (after Easter to end June; and in September and October) can affect *mezza pensione* (half-board) and *pension completa* (full board: usually 5€ extra for a midday meal) prices hugely. For example: the prices at the first hotel below range from €43/52 (from 'normal bedrooms' to small suites with the best views) in low season to €78/90 in August. Some hotels list 12 price bands for differing periods in the months April to October. English is widely understood and spoken.

Alexander Hotel Cima Tosa.

38018 Molveno (Trento). Very comfortable modernised hotel. Cooking 1 (to 5) for *pensione* meals. Small garden. Superb views. Lifts. Garage. Parking. Family (Bonetti) run; led by fluent English-speaking Alessandro. Good choice for meals. Excellent buffet breakfasts. Loads of interior panelling. Would return. Rooms 32. Cards All. Closed November-Xmas; 8 January-Easter. Half-board per person €43-90. Tel 0461 586928. Fax 0461 586950. Email <info@alexandermolveno.com>. Website <www.alexandermolveno.com>



Hotel Nevada.

38018 Molveno (Trento). Tivy recommended. Simple to comfortable large chalet-style newish hotel. Cooking 1 (to 5) for *pensione* meals. Quiet. Garden. Lake views. Lift. Rooms 42. Cards All. Closed (check ahead). Half-board per person €32-63. Tel 0461 586970. Email <info@hotelnevada.it> Website <www.hotelnevada.it>



Hotel Gran Paradis.

38031 Campitello di Fassa (Trento). Comfortable hotel Cooking 1-2 (to 5) for *pensione* meals. Garden. Superb indoor swimming pool. Gym. Sauna. Lift. Parking. Family (Colcuc) run; led by younger generation Ingrid and Christian, both smiling charmers and fluent English-speakers. Good buffet breakfast. Lots of interior wood. Rooms 27. Cards All. Closed 7 April-14 June; October-mid December. Half-board per person €48-77. Tel 0462 750135. Fax 0462 750148. Email <info@granparadis.com> Website <www.granparadis.com>



(Mostly German biker clients in summer season; read what follows! They cause no problems but 20 or more can clear the entire breakfast buffet within five minutes of the dining room doors opening at 7.30 a.m. I hasten to add the buffet is fully replenished in a further few minutes. Take breakfast at 8.30.)

Driving in Italy

For the first-time driver in Italy I should explain three basic Italian driving habits. 1) They 'tailgate' like no other Europeans (they 'drive', like dogs on short leads, very close to your rear bumper, close enough to read who assembled your number plate). 2) They ignore all speed limits, unless 'forced' to; see later comments. 3) They ignore all solid white lines in the middle of the road when overtaking.

Why the (?) in 'Dolomites delight (?)'?

Before my 2003 visit I had no idea of the 21C German *blitzkrieg* on the superb mountain roads in the Dolomites.

Thousands upon thousands of German 'bikers' 'dominate' the mountain roads: they resemble oversized noisy hornets, zipping and zapping from corner to corner, more often than not in convoys of 10 to 20.

Dressed primarily in black leathers they 'ride' their powerful machines at double the fastest car's average speed, whether ascending or descending. A thirty yards 'straight', from one blind bend to the next, even if 'protected' with a solid white line in the middle of the road, does not prevent two to three of the bikers jiggling past 'in-the-way' cars. They 'ride' like demented dervishes. For car drivers ear plugs become an essential motoring accessory.

The bikers emerge from 'blind corners' ahead of you at breakneck speeds, some tight to the right hand side of the bend, others in the middle of the road. Approaching drivers **must** concentrate all the time: keep your eyes like leeches on the road; and place your car flush to the right edge.

Their 'Holy Grail' must surely be the mighty Stelvio Pass. The 9,048ft summit is a gigantic biker's hive: hundreds of them are *in situ*. Many mobile, will-travel-anywhere German fast-food traders set-up shop on the col to feed their ever-hungry compatriots with a fair selection of the reputed 1,000 or more 'Sausages of Germany'.

'Dominate' is the word. They've become the 'Pirate Barons' of the mountain roads; they are in a biker's paradise. They also dominate, by sheer weight of numbers, most *pizzerias*, *ristorantes* and, to a lesser extent, many hotels and *pensiones*. Not surprisingly the latter welcome them with open arms; many offer special 'biker' rates to ensure cash tills ring merrily. To be fair I never saw any biker behaving anything but impeccably when dismounted.

I could cope; but so I should with almost 50 years of motoring and competitions behind me. I would imagine most experienced drivers would also cope; but I suspect the unwelcome bikers riding domination could frighten many of you. If so I suggest you do not 'drive' in the Dolomites.

Crafty speed limits

On the entrance roads of numerous villages you'll see the normal speed limit signs, followed or preceded by a 'beware speed radar' symbol and, metres later, an upcoming traffic lights warning.

You'll then see the traffic lights ahead of you; one to the right and another high above the road; plus a stop white line across the Tarmac. The traffic lights, more often than not, do not 'control' a traffic junction. Their purpose is this: if you've obeyed the set speed limit the traffic lights will remain green; if you haven't they will immediately change to red. You then have to stop; when green proceed. During our trip I noticed one or two Italian cars did not stop at the red light!

You soon learn to obey the village speed limits. Desmond Tivy reckons: 'If you don't stop at the red light that's a worse violation; I expect a camera will record your licence-plate if you so do (as some U.S.A. cities do!).'

He could be right: the police could book you for two offences. Initially I looked hard for hidden cameras but I did not spot any. I gave up looking. Considering the outrageous behaviour of many Italian drivers on open roads I applaud this 'crafty' system in villages.

Telephone

Unlike phone calls to France or England, as examples, callers must **not** omit the first zero from any Italian phone number. For most European countries the Italian international code is 0039; from U.S.A. use 01139.

Maps and Guides

I recommend three Michelin products: the red guide for hotels and restaurants; the Itay green guide for tourist information; and the Italy Touring and Motoring Atlas.