

The Italian Dolomites

Naturetrek Tour Itinerary

Outline itinerary

- Day 1** Fly to Venice and transfer to the Fassa Valley
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- Day 2/7** A programme of botanical day walks from our base in the Fassa Valley
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- Day 8** Fly London
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Departs

June

Focus

Plants

Grading

Day walks only. Grade B. Between 910 and 2,440 metres

Dates and Prices

See website (tour code ITA08) or brochure

Highlights

- Explore in the Footsteps of Farrer
- Enjoy walking in search of some of Europe's rarer alpine plants
- Discover Tyrolean Primrose, Pink Cinquefoil, Bluish Paederota, amongst others
- Search for the King of the Alps, *Eritrichium nanum*
- Encounter a wealth of Alpine butterflies and birds too
- Enjoy a special family-run mountain hotel, and its delicious cuisine
- Learn from our expert botanical tour leaders



From Top: Dolomites –Val de Vaiiolet, Marsh Fritillary, Pink Cinquefoil (Jessica Turner)



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N.B. Please note that the itinerary below offers our planned programme of excursions. However, adverse weather and other local considerations can necessitate some re-ordering of the programme during the course of the tour, though this will always be done to maximise best use of the time and weather conditions available.

Introduction

Throughout this holiday, we will be based at the Hotel Gran Mugon situated in the village of Tamion in the Fassa Valley, which has been inhabited since the Iron Age. This comfortable, friendly hotel is run by a family of keen skiers who know every inch of the area. Here, as throughout Europe, farming practices have had an enriching influence on the vegetation and on the diversity of the plant communities.

Our holiday will take the turn-of-the-century alpine botanist, Reginald Farrer's book 'The Dolomites' as its starting point, and will take the opportunity to explore, as did Farrer, both the limestone and granitic mountains which present dramatic scenery and fascinating habitats for alpine plants, some of which are unique to the area.

This relaxing week is set amongst the mountains but does not involve any strenuous mountaineering! There will be ample opportunity to slowly explore the rich meadows of the valleys with their outstanding flora while surrounded by some of the most spectacular scenery in Italy.

Day 1

Fassa Valley

We will depart from London Gatwick on a scheduled flight to Venice. On arrival we will transfer to our privately hired minibuses for the drive north, into the Province of Trentino and the Dolomite Mountains. During the initial part of the journey, the vegetation will reflect aspects of the Mediterranean climate and then, as we get further north-east into the Adige Valley, low altitude mountain vegetation will start to appear.

On our arrival in the Fassa Valley we will settle into our hotel, using what is left of the day to explore our immediate surroundings. The woods and meadows all about offer the most delightful walks, and as Farrer suggests, one may come across *Cypripedium* (Lady's Slipper) – as indeed we have in previous years.

Day 2

Fassa Valley

Today we will take a short drive through the village of Pozza di Fassa to the Valle di S. Nicolo. We start by walking through botanically rich and colourful meadows with *Salvia pratensis*, Globe Flowers, *Trollius europaeus* and Small Sanfoin, *Onobrychis arenaria*, amongst others. We then walk through spruce and pine woods, noting the *Pinus mugo*, Mountain Pine and *P. cembra*, Arolla Pine, with *Clematis alpina* climbing through them and the several colour forms of the *Polygala chamaebuxus*, Shrubby Milkwort, on the forest floor. Along the path we will see large patches of *Daphne cneorum* (Garland Flower) and *Erica herbacea* (Spring Heath).

We picnic in the upland meadows with *Filipendula vulgaris* and *Thalictrum aquilegifolium*, Great Meadow Rue, around us. Following the path up, we see yellow and white *Pulsatillas* and many Gentians. Up on the scree we will find

purple patches of the endemic *Thlaspi rotundifolium subsp. cepaeifolium*. Depending on time and energy levels we may reach the Passo S. Nicolo (2338m). Walking back, we will enjoy a drink at the Rifugio Baita alle Cascate in the upland meadows, before retracing our footsteps to our waiting minibuses.

Day 3

Gardeccia

Another short drive through Pozza di Fasso brings us to the Catinaccio group of mountains known as King Lauren's Rose Garden, whose peaks can be seen from our hotel, glowing red from early sunshine.

A narrow road leads us up to the small hamlet of Gardeccia at 1948m where we will start our walk. The path leads us alongside a mountain torrent to screes and rocks rich with high alpine plants, some of which are endemic. The silvery leaves of *Potentilla nitida* clothe the rocks, and we hope to see a few of their early pink flowers. *Paederota bonarota* hangs from rock crevices and we will also see *Doronicum columnae*, Heart-leaved Leopardsbane. Some other alpines we will come across include *Antennaria dioica*, Catsfoot, *Papaver rhaeticum*, Rhaetan Poppy, and *Hutchinsia alpina*, Chamois Cress.

Walking through conifers, we will see wintergreens *Moneses uniflora* and *Pyrola media*. This is also a good valley to see ferns, including *Botrychium lunaria*. We follow the track up to the Rifugio Preuss (2240m) perched on the cliff high above us. Fortunately there is an easy way up, round the back! We will have our picnic here, with spectacular mountain views, before retracing our steps to Gardeccia.

Day 4

Panevèggio

We will spend today in the National Park of Panevèggio, about an hour's drive from our hotel. We will stop first at the visitors' centre outside the park for maps and then move on to Val Venegia (this valley is reputed to have all the flowers of the Dolomites!). We start by walking through damp meadows with Marsh Orchids, both *Pinguicula leptoceras* (Southern Butterwort) and *P. alpina* (Alpine Butterwort) and masses of *Primula farinosa* (Bird's Eye Primrose).

After a picnic lunch by the river we climb through rocky spruce woods, seeing *Primula auricula*, and several spp. of Gentian and Saxifrage on the way. We come out on the almost white limestone scree of that magnificent mountain Cimon della Pala, where we will see our first pink patches of *Rhodothamnus chamaecistus*, the Dwarf Alpenrose and the endemic *Primula tyrolensis*.



Southern Butterwort, *Pinguicula leptoceras*
by Su Gough

Day 5

Pordoi Pass

We drive to the Pordoi Pass (2239m) with its magnificent views and spend the morning walking up the Vial del Pan (Farrer's Bindelweg). On the way up we will see many alpinines, including *Anemone baldensis*, Monte Baldo Anemone, *Vitaliana primuliflora* and *Androsace obtusifolia*, and an interesting dwarf prostrate Buckthorn, *Rhamnus pumilus*.

At the top of the path we get a stunning view of the mountain Marmolada, which has the only permanent glacier in the Dolomites. We drive on to the Sella Pass, with more magnificent views. We picnic below the pass amongst limestone rocks and occasional Spruce, where we will see *Gentiana punctata*, Spotted Gentian.

Day 6

Monzonithal

We will spend the morning exploring the richness of the meadows round the hotel, all with a differing flora. We will see large composites, such as *Buphthalmum salicifolium*, Yellow Ox-eye, *Arnica montana* and *Centaurea montana*, Mountain Cornflower, and small clumps of *Aster alpinus*. Also present are Campanulas such as *C. glomerata* and *C. barbata*, tall spikes of *Knautia dipsacifolia*, Wood Scabious and *Scabiosa lucida*, Shining Scabious.

We will also encounter several members of the Lily family, including *Paradisea liliastrum*, St. Bruno's Lily and the bright orange *Lilium bulbiferum*, spikes of *Traunsteinera globosa*, the Pink Globe Orchid, and a large patch of Lady's Slipper Orchid.

In the afternoon we take our minibuses and picnic below the granite slopes on Monzonithal. Here we will find large patches of *Mianthemum bifolium*, May Lily. We take the short steep walk up to the Rifugio Taramelli below the Monzonithal. On the way up we will see *Rhodiola rosea*, Roseroot, *Rhododendron ferrugineum* and *Linaria alpina*, Alpine Toadflax.



Alpine Toadflax, *Linaria alpina* by Paul Harnes

Leaving the Rifugio Taramelli we take the path towards the Passo delle Selle, with spectacular views all round us. Again, we will see an exciting alpina flora on the screes, among them *Ranunculus glacialis* and *Geum reptans*.

Day 7

Panevéggio

We will spend another day in the the National Park of Panevéggio, this time driving to the Passo di Rolle and then up the gravel track to the Rifugio Baita Segantini at 2170m. After a picnic by a small lake we take the path on up to the scree shoulder of Cimon della Pala. On the way up we will see *Antennaria carpatica*, Carpathian Catsfoot, *Loiseleuria procumbens*, Creeping Azalea, the white and violet forms of *Crocus albiflorus* and *Lloydia serotina*, the Snowdon Lily. Growing from the rocks is the endemic *Primula minima*, Least Primrose, and *Eritrichium nanum*, the King of the Alps.

Day 8

London

Today will be a short day, with hopefully time for a last walk (depending on flight times) in the meadows before we leave to catch the plane back to London from Venice.

Tour grading

On this holiday, we will be based at one hotel throughout. We will explore the mountains of this spectacular region and will look at the flora growing on the dolomitic limestone and compare it with that growing on the granite mountains where the soils are more acid. We will take daily walks of between six and 12 kilometres in length. The pace will be gentle with time to explore and examine the scree slopes and the rocky outcrops which we come across; when you are botanising the going is usually slow! We will have the support of two minibuses (depending on group size) to allow the maximum flexibility, and enable us to plan alternative options for each day's programme if necessary.

Weather

Although snow has fallen in the month of June in the Fassa Valley, we hope that by timing the holiday for the latter part of the month, we will enjoy good sunny weather with long days and clear skies. We should, however, be prepared for changeable weather and good waterproof clothing with some warm walking gear is advisable. When sunny, the days should be warm (up to 75°F or 23°C) but the evenings may be chilly.

Food & accommodation

All the food and accommodation is included in the price of this holiday. Past clients have been delighted at the standard of our hotel's catering! We will ensure that the daily picnic lunches which we carry with us onto the mountains will be excellent and will reflect, as far as possible, the local produce.

Plant lists and previous tour reports

Where available these are automatically provided on booking, and will gladly be sent to you before, if you wish for a more detailed preview.

How to book your place on this tour:

In order to book your place on this holiday, please give us a call on 01962 733051 with a credit or debit card, book online at www.naturetrek.co.uk, or alternatively complete and post the booking form at the back of our main Naturetrek brochure, together with a deposit of 20% of the holiday cost plus any room supplements if required. If you do not have a copy of the brochure, please call us on 01962 733051 or request one via our website. Please stipulate any special requirements, for example extension requests or connecting/regional flights, at the time of booking.

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