



NOLS ALUMNI TRIP
HIKING ITALY'S DOLOMITES – ALTA VIA 1
SEPTEMBER 14 - 21, 2012

Features of This Trip

- 6 nights in the field at “rifugio”
- Eating and sleeping in “rifugi” keeps pack weight down
- 7 moving days
- One night (paired lodging) on each end in a Bolzano hotel
- Approx. 40 mile, trailed route
- Stunning scenery in the Italian Alps
- Hiking at elevations of 6-9,000 feet
- Optional pre-trip day activities in historic Bolzano
- Cultural interaction
- Group size: up to 12 participants and 2 instructors

Cost: \$2495

Minimum Age: 21

Trip Description:

Join a small group of NOLS grads, friends, families and instructors for a week of spectacular hiking in the Dolomites as we trek between "rifugi" (small, hostel-style lodgings) during the Italian Alps' early autumn.

This trip will re-acquaint you with NOLS backpacking techniques in a convivial, relaxing and visually stunning location. Instruction is geared to your interests, with optional walk-up peaks, Italian "word(s) of the day," time for journal writing and photography, and more. Of course, non-alumni friends and family are also invited— this is a great way to introduce NOLS to your sidekicks.

The route offers a moderate level of hiking— the average hiking day is about 5-miles with variable changes in elevation—averaging about 2,400' per move. For those that want more, there will be options to do additional day hiking with an instructor.

Connecting our string of rifugi gives us the chance to savor Italian cuisine and culture while mixing with other, mostly European travelers in a dorm-style setting. Sleeping and dining (dinner and breakfasts) in the rifugi allows us to considerably lighten our packs for our daily mountain hikes among the stunning spires, valleys, ridges and peaks of northern Italy.

The trip spends 6-nights in the "field" at rifugi and 7-days hiking. Unlike a standard NOLS expedition, we won't carry cook gear, or heavy rations—even pads and sleeping bags are not needed at the rifugi, but we'll do "real" trail hiking over varied terrain with our lightened backpacks.

The Environment:

The Dolomites offer a variety of mountain terrain—boasting grassy meadows, stands of conifers, large boulders and wide expanses of exposed bedrock. The majority of our trek follows established trails with limited signage. In addition, weather at this time of year can vary widely—including hot, sunny days, or rain mixed with even heavy snow at higher elevations. Temps are likely to be 60-65 F. during the days and near 40 at night. Most hiking will be in the 6,500-9,000' elevation range with nearby peaks reaching about 10,000'.

The Rifugi:

Rifugi are mountain hotels ranging from extremely posh to very basic. Our rifugio lodging will supply hostel-like accommodations in either large, common, mixed-gender bunkrooms or a series of smaller rooms. Showers are available for an extra cost (~€4- bring your own towel). The rifugi supply a bed and heavy blankets, but no sheets. Lightweight sleeping bag liners serve as sheets and are required. Earplugs may also come in handy. Some past participants have appreciated switching from trail gear to warm and comfortable evening lounge clothes.

Well-made dinner and breakfasts are part of the lodging package (“mezza-pensione”), but alcohol is not. Wine and beer are available at the rifugi for €4-9. We’ll eat in a dining room with a common table for our group. Breakfasts include fresh coffee, tea and pastries/cereal/yogurt. Dinners are likely to be pastas, chicken, soups and salad.

In September, the trails and rifugi attract people from all over Europe, providing a true cross-cultural experience. From Milan to Bolzano to the rifugi, there is not a lot of English spoken. Italian and German are predominant, so you might enjoy an Italian phrase book- the *Lonely Planet* series is good for tourist ideas and basic country facts.

Curriculum:

This trip focuses on many traditional NOLS activities, including map reading, hiking and group travel. The instructors will present information necessary for the group to comfortably travel and can present optional topics desired by the participants- including natural history, NOLS’ leadership topics and relevant local human history. Formal “classes” are few and mostly optional. Anticipate a required base level of group management and cohesion— this is a mountain expedition.

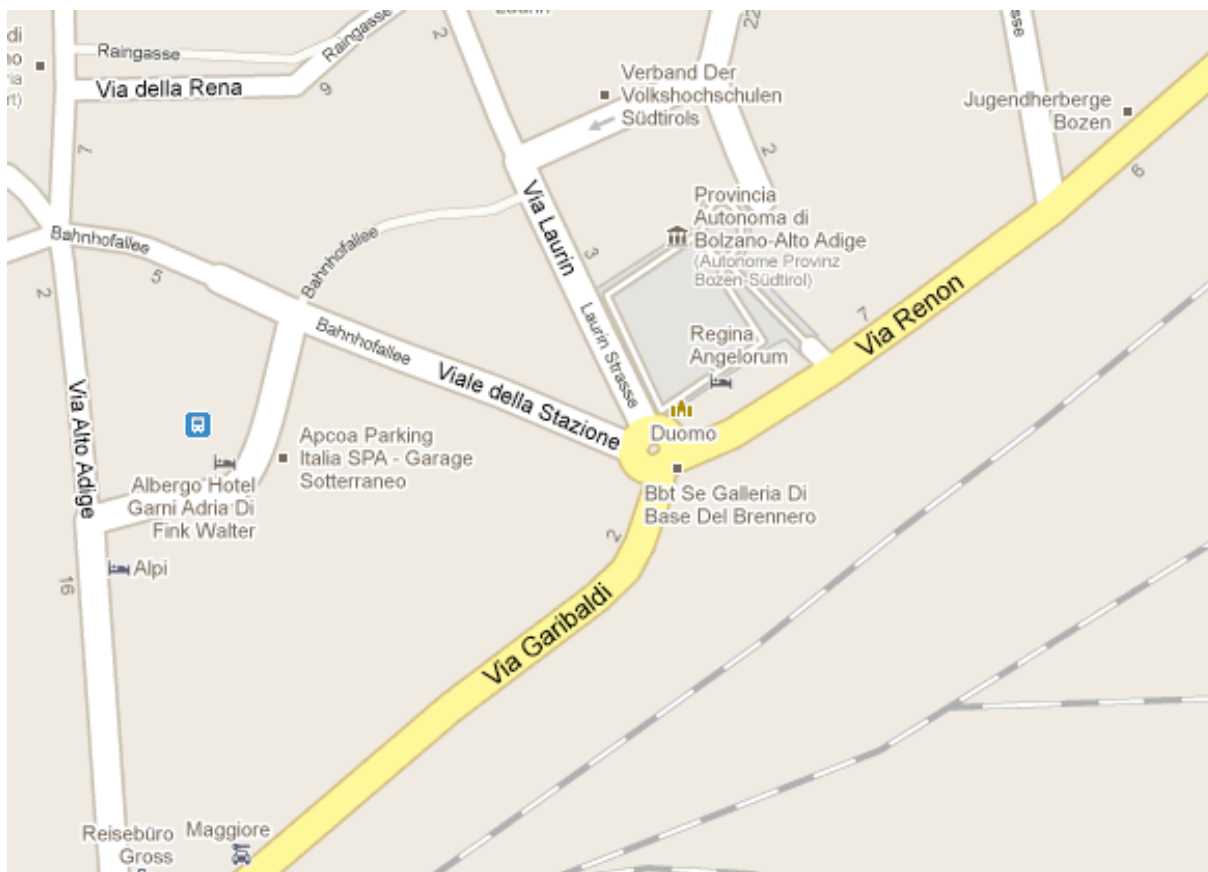
Alumni trips, though more relaxed than a typical NOLS course, are not full-on vacations or guided trips. They are self-reliant trips through remote areas where evacuation to modern medical facilities can take several days. Throughout the trip, you will travel outdoors and care for yourself. The expedition format emphasizes hands-on learning and application of skills in a variety of situations. Participants have the freedom to bring equipment that is necessary for their comfort and enjoyment of the trip and are expected to take responsibility for this aspect of the trip.

Trip Logistics:

The trip starts and ends in the ancient, cobble-stoned city of Bolzano (capital of the autonomous province of Bolzano-Bozen: population ~100K), which is easily reached by train from Milan, a renowned fashion, historic and artistic center (the travel information supplies details). Participants should plan on flying in and out of Bolzano (code: BZO, likely connecting via Rome), Munich, Verona, or Milan Malpensa Airport (code: MXP). Consider staying extra days on either end of the trip to explore the sights of northern Italy.

From Bolzano, our group will take a series of shuttle rides to and from our “roadheads” in the mountains.

Bolzano Map:



Note: in the map above, the Bolzano train station exits onto the “Base Del Brennero” square. Our hotel is about a block up Via Laurin, on the left.

NOLS has secured lodging for our group (we’ll single-gender pair up the group) at the Parkhotel Laurin on the nights of September 14 and 21. The hotel is a five-minute walk from the train station. If you want to stay at the Parkhotel Laurin before or after our trip dates, contact us for possible special NOLS rate details.

Currency:

You’ll need cash in the form of Euros for miscellaneous purchases and transportation throughout the trip. You’ll receive the best exchange at your local bank, but money change kiosks are handy in most airports. US credit cards will work in most locations, including train stations, but it’s often a good idea to give your credit card company a heads up that you’re traveling internationally. About 100 Euros will be plenty of cash for the field portion of the trip for incidental purchases. It is difficult to predict if our rifugi will take credit cards.

Air Travel:

There are four main ways to access Bolzano from the United States: fly into Munich and then train; fly into Milan Malpensa Airport and train; or travel to Verona and catch a train to Bolzano.

Our trip starts and ends in Bolzano, which is served by Lufthansa regional flights out of Munich or Rome. If you’re keen to utilize Italy’s extensive train system, consider flying into Milan’s Malpensa International Airport (code: MXP). Milan requires using the bus and train system to reach Bolzano (details below – takes about 3.5 hours).

Depending on where you first touch down in Europe, you may either clear customs in that city or in Milan. You don't need a visa, but customs will stamp your passport.

Travel in Italy – Flying Direct into Bolzano:

The Airport Bolzano Dolomiti code is "BZO." Check Lufthansa regional commuter airlines or Alitalia for connections via Munich or Rome. You may also have luck using Air Alps, Air Europa, Air Dolomiti, Iberia, Lauda Air, Italy First, or Olympic Airways regional carriers. Our hotel in the historic city center is about a 20-min taxi ride from the airport.

Travel in Italy – Flying into Milan, Then Train to Bolzano:

STAGE ONE – FROM MILAN MALPENSA AIRPORT TO THE Central MILAN TRAIN

STATION - When you arrive at Milan Malpensa Airport (MXP) you'll likely retrieve your luggage in Terminal #1. Follow the sign to the trains via a pedestrian tunnel. Purchase a ticket at the counter for a ride from Malpensa to Milano Centrale (~11.00 euros, one way). Trains leave hourly at 22 and 43 minutes after the hour.

For your return from Bolzano, you can buy a train ticket right back to Malpensa.

Please note that Milan's Stazione Centrale has some very good and inexpensive sandwich shops. Consider picking up a bottle of water and a sandwich for the train ride.

STAGE TWO - TRAIN FROM MILAN TO BOLZANO - At Milan Central Station, proceed into the Station Head House and go to the ticket windows for inter-city trains. Purchase a ticket to Bolzano- ("per favore un biglietto per Bolzano- andata solamente." Cost is about €38). This ticket allows you to change trains in Verona (layover 20-40 minutes) and board the Bolzano train. Validate your ticket using the yellow trackside punch machine before boarding your train.

The train tickets have important information printed on them. Typical wording might say "Carrozza 005, posti 31 finestrino"- this means that you are on car 005, your reserved window seat is number 31. The trains are smoke-free and luggage is stored in the compartment.

The trip from Milan to Verona is about 80-90 minutes depending on the train. Layover and change trains in Verona for 20-40 minutes. The final train leg to Bolzano is about two and a half hours. Get off at the Bolzano/Bozen main station. Your train may come to "Sud Bolzano" before Bolzano proper- wait for the true Bolzano/Bozen stop.

Munich Option:

Munich is a central flight hub for many airlines, including United Airlines and their European partner Lufthansa. It is easy to travel by train from Munich to Bolzano.

Flights from the US arrive at Munich Airport Terminal #2. When you clear customs, you'll walk into a public area with an excellent, English-speaking help desk front and center. You can go straight ahead to the next row of counters to the train ticket counter. Purchase a ticket from the airport to Munich's main train station, Hauptbahnhof Central Station— a 45-minute ride. Terminal 2 has some shops, so consider at least buying bottled water— it will help with jet lag on the ride to Hauptbahnhof Central Station.

Trains depart from the airport at frequent intervals— walk straight out the main exit, across a covered plaza and follow the signs down to the train platform (tickets can also be purchased from

machines on the platform). Both the S1 and S8 trains go to Hauptbahnhof Central Station, though the S8 seems most direct. This train leg costs about €10-18- there are sometimes “partner” fares that get you a reduced price for two people traveling together.

At the large, central station you can purchase a regional ticket for the ~4 hour ride from Munich to Bolzano. There are numerous departure options, so purchasing at the central station will give you some flexibility with your flight and airport commute arrival logistics. Carry your luggage onto the train and place it in a luggage rack.

We’ve had good luck pre-buying Munich-Bolzano tickets from raileurope.com. Recent rates for the cheapest, one-way seats were about \$30, plus an \$18 shipping fee (hard tickets are mailed to you, so you need some lead time for delivery). These tickets, although a bargain, are not flexible— if you’re significantly early or late, you may have trouble changing your tickets. Remember to validate your tickets on the departing train platform. There are many eatery options in this station, but your train is unlikely to have any food service.

The train stops right in downtown Bolzano (sometimes indicated as “Bozen” its former, Austrian spelling) about one easy walking block from the Parkhotel Laurin (Laurin Strasse 4).

Accommodations:

The trip tuition includes paired lodging (Akin to tenting in the field, we’ll pair you in single gender rooms in town. If you’re a pair with someone on the trip, please let us know.) at Bolzano’s Parkhotel Laurin on September 14 and the final night in Bolzano, September 21. If you come early or want to stay in the area after the trip, contact us (alumni@nols.edu) and we’ll provide lodging suggestions.

Personal baggage that doesn’t go into the mountains with you can be stored at our Bolzano hotel. This is reasonably secure storage, but highly expensive items (e.g. computers or other electronics) should not be left in your in-town bags. NOLS assumes no responsibility for your stored baggage.

Hotel information: Parkhotel Laurin, Via Laurin Straße 4, I - 39100 Bolzano/Bozen. Tel: +39 0471 311 000. See: <http://www.laurin.it/en/>.

Itinerary 2012:

Sept. 12	Depending connections and possible pre-trip plans, many participants will depart the US on this day.	
Sept. 13	We urge you to arrive in Bolzano on this day, allowing for jet lag recovery, possible baggage snafus and some optional activities on 9/14.	Lodging: on your own, but we suggest the Parkhotel Laurin.
Sept. 14	For those in Bolzano, we'll loosely organize some optional activities from our hotel- including a visit to the "Iceman" at the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology and acclimatizing day hikes in the mountains near town. Our pre-trip group orientation occurs at 6:30 p.m. in the Parkhotel Lauren lobby.	Lodging provided by NOLS at the Parkhotel Laurin. (we'll double up same gender pairs – let us know if you're a couple!). Dinner on your own.
Sept. 15	Pack up. Store in-town luggage. Vehicle shuttle to Lago Braies roadhead. Hike 5+ miles.	Lodging: Rifugio Sennes. Breakfast is included with the hotel.
Sept. 16	Hike 6+ miles.	Lodging: Rifugio La Varella
Sept. 17	Hike 6+ miles—this is our most challenging day.	Lodging: Lagazuoi Rifugio
Sept. 18	Hike ~2 miles using a mix of cable cars and chair lifts. Explore an open-air WWI museum.	Lodging: Rifugio Cinque Torri
Sept. 19	Hike 3+ miles.	Lodging: Rifugio Palmieri
Sept. 20	Hike 7+ miles.	Lodging: Rifugio Venezia
Sept. 21	Hike 5+ miles to our roadhead near Borda di Cadore. Shuttle to Bolzano.	Lodging provided by NOLS at the Parkhotel Laurin (same gender paired rooms). No host dinner.
Sept. 22	Depart Bolzano/fly home.	Breakfast at hotel included

Contact Information:

The NOLS alumni office is located at the NOLS Headquarters in Lander, Wyoming. We can be reached at (800) 332-4280. Email is also an option: alumni@nols.edu. If you have any **problems on arrival day**, please leave a message for us at 800-332-4280.

Registration and Payment:

To reserve a space on this trip, please submit a non-refundable deposit of \$200 per person to the NOLS Alumni Department. Mastercard or Visa works via phone (800.332.4280), or mail a check to: NOLS Alumni Department, 284 Lincoln St. Lander, WY 82520. The remainder of the tuition and all application forms are **due by August 3, 2012**.

Equipment List

NOLS provides:	Maps, First Aid Kits, Emergency Communications, Water Treatment, Emergency Shelter, Trail Food
Bring these items with you:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 1 set of light or medium synthetic long underwear • comfortable medium or lightweight hiking boots – sized to fit with a liner/ wool, or 2 pairs of wool socks system (contact us for additional boot fitting information). • hiking socks (2-4 pair) • water bottle (wide mouth quart or liter size plastic) • flashlight/ headlamp and batteries • sunglasses • sleeping bag liner–silk is available–we’re using rifugio bunk beds with a basic sheet, pillow and quilt. Consider a bag liner with a built-in pillow holder. A liner is a required. • medium-sized backpack- large enough to fit your personal gear, but no food/ cooking items or tents. • long sleeve shirt for sun protection (1) • underwear (1-2 pairs) • sneakers or similar non-hiking shoes • warm hat • toiletries • gaiters • hiking shorts • sunscreen/ lip balm • rain jacket & wind pants • t-shirt • wool or fleece gloves • sun hat/ ball cap
Nice touches:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • camera with waterproof bag • small towel for optional rifugio showers • extra pair of prescription glasses or contact lenses • personal reading book • hiking poles (collapsible) - takes hiking stress off the knees • casual shirt/ slacks – lightweight options for dinner or shower room treks at the rifugios. • Pack cover, heavy weight can-sized and smaller plastic bags— all for waterproofing your pack & contents.
Notes:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Your US cell phone may or may not work in Europe. Check with your carrier for details. • Depending on the exact items you bring, packs are likely to be in the 18-25 pound range. You should be able to use a pack that is 3-4,000 cubic inches. • Boot fit is key. You can use fairly light boots because of the light packs and trail travel. Contact us w/ questions.

Basically, you’ll need a t-shirt, 3 insulating layers, plus a wind proof and a rain proof layer— all must fit comfortably over each other so they can be worn at the same time. If you tend to get cold easily, add a fleece vest, or second pile jacket. On your legs plan 1-2 insulating layers that fit under your wind/rain pants. Call us (800.332.4280) with questions!