

Untold Italy Episode 85 - Hiking in the Dolomites

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 85.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Ciao everyone! Hope you're all happy and well and bringing a little bit of Italy into your life everyday. I know I do! Luckily for me I get to talk about Italy and to Italians most days but I also like to have a daily cappuccino, listen to some Italian songs and do some Italian language practise. I'm using Rocket Italian for that at the moment, I started off with Duolingo which is free and pretty good but reminded me of my primary school Italian lessons which were quite basic.

I also started listening to a lot of podcasts like Coffee Break Italian but in the end I found that I needed a bit of structure and a way to set myself goals and see progress. So I use Rocket Italian which does a great job of showing my progress and reminding me when I go a bit off track.

I'm going to be honest with you, I need to practise a lot more than I do, but when I do put in the effort I can really see the progress - especially when I speak. I've always been a bit embarrassed about my accent and thought an Australian Italian twang would sound really weird but it's actually getting more Italian thanks to the audio and speech training in the Rocket Italian program. If you want to test it out to see if it is a learning style that could work for you they have a really decent free trial program. I'll pop that into the show notes for anyone that is interested.

Now truth be told, at most places you go to in Italy, you can get by with basic Italian and a big smile. And we absolutely encourage everyone to learn at least a few words. But if you want to explore a little further beyond the main cities and understand Italian culture it's useful to take your fluency a little further.

One of the areas where a little extra Italian can come in very handy is the Dolomites. This spectacular mountain range is one of the most beautiful places in the world and a very popular place to go hiking. Today I've invited my friends Kate and Vin from South Tyrol and Dolomites travel resource Throne and Vine back on the show to give us the low down on how

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to go hiking in this area. Now while there are plenty of hikes for mountaineers if you want to stretch yourself, we won't be focusing on those today. Kate and Vin like a more gentle approach to exploring on foot and have selected hikes that can be enjoyed by most people. So strap on your virtual hiking boots and off we go!

Katy

Benvenuti. Ciao and welcome back to the Untold Italy podcast.

Vin

Ciao, it's great to be back.

Kate

It is. We're very happy to be back.

Katy

Oh, I'm so thrilled I managed to coax you back on the show. So many of our listeners loved our earlier episode on South Tyrol and the Dolomites and wanted to hear more from you. But for those of them that missed that one, maybe you can give another introduction of yourselves.

Vin

Sure, we're Vin and Kate - our blog is Thrown and Vine and we're focused strictly on South Tyrol, which is the most northern region of Italy. It's a very mountainous region. I think there's a twenty six mountain ranges just in the Dolomites alone. And it's also kind of a contrast in climates in that you have a Mediterranean alpine kind of colliding together. And on our first visit we fell in love with it. And we go back every year and do a lot of hiking and exploring the culture as well.

Katy

Fantastic. Now, today, I thought we'd talk about hiking. Seeing as that's one of the main reasons that people go to that region of Italy was a hiking that took you there in the first place Kate?

Kate

Actually it partially was. That's a big part of what we like to do in our spare time, one of our big hobbies. So that was something that we were looking for. We were also looking for something that just had a lot of castles and vineyards and still had somewhat of a Germanesque feel to it because we had previously gone to Germany and fallen in love with that as well. And so you're looking for that perfect blend which we found in South Tyrol.

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Katy

Yeah. And it's certainly one of the places in the world that you can get out into nature and experience it. And it's so popular with so many people from all over the world, especially Europe. But before we get started on some of the specific hikes, I was wondering and I'm a bit curious what is different, if anything, about hiking in Italy compared with hiking in other parts of the world, particularly the United States and other places you go?

Vin

I would say probably the biggest difference is in Italy, at least in the South Tyrol, when you're hiking, you have an opportunity to visit what they call Rifugios or mountain huts. And they're essentially mountainside taverns where you can stop and have a drink or grab a meal and dotted throughout the mountains. So pretty much no matter what trail you go on, you can count on running into one. And there are these rustic farmhouse type settings, and that's something we really enjoy. And you just can't find that in the United States, everywhere we hike over here, you have to get back in your car and drive to a restaurant. You're not going to find one on a mountain.

Katy

It's a bit of an upper level to trail mix, isn't it?

Vin

It certainly is. They're usually timed just right when you want a beer. So.

Katy

All right. So beer/wine - what sort of dishes do they say? But these Rifugios?

Kate

It's a lot of typical traditional South Tyrolean cuisine since they are in the more kind of rustic setting than some of the other restaurants. So you will find Schlutzkrupfen which are your raviolis. That's stuffed. You'll also find some Kaiserschmarrn, which has the it's almost like a funnel cake with some of the jellies and marmalades on top. Very, very good. So you can find a lot of the typical Tyrolean dishes and even a lot of the time you'll be able to find some just regular Italian or regular German dishes as well.

Katy

Oh, well, you probably need to do a lot of hiking to get stuck into that type of meal. Oh my goodness. Just as it should be, just as it should be. So do the people who stay up there on the mountain and then or do they come down every night and hike up there and back themselves.

Vin

In certain mountain ranges, you can stay at a mountain hut overnight. And actually there are some resorts up there as well. But in general, I think most people will stay down in the valleys because you'll have more new dining options. You also have more of a chance to kind of walk around and check out some of the history of the area. So, for example, where we like to go in Val Gardena, there's three villages there that we like to stay in. So each day you can get on a lift, head up to the mountain and do some hiking and come back down at night and walk the town. And sometimes they'll have festivals you can partake in. And so that's typically how we like to recommend people do it. But of course, if you want to be up on the mountain and see the sunrise, you can find a place to do that as well.

Katy

Yeah, that sounds amazing. All right. So shall we talk about some of these hikes? Because I think everyone's itching to know and what I thought we'd talk about today is that what I really wanted to get across is that you can hike in this area no matter what your abilities. So I don't want people to think that you need to be a pro athlete to enjoy this experience. And let me tell you, I definitely do not fall into that category. So maybe we should start with one of the easy hikes.

Kate

Yes. So one of the easiest and one of our favorites is Alpe di Siusi which is one of Europe's largest high alpine pastures. And it's a very, very simple hike. There's very minimal inclined to it. And it's lot a of small rolling hills, what's great about it, too, is that you're just going to see a lot of Rifugios all over the place kind of dotting the pasture and a lot of wonderful flowers and wildlife.

Vin

Plenty of cows.

Katy

How about the baby goats?

Vin

Goat - baby goats, cows, plenty of horses. But the greatest sight of the Alpe di Siusi, the rolling meadow is nice and dreamy. But when you get up to the top of the first mountain massive, you see is Sassolungo. And it is incredibly huge. It's hard to picture it or describe it in words. A picture doesn't do it justice, but it is a ten thousand foot giant that spans about 17 miles and it kind of anchors the western southern end of the Alpe di Siusi. And then more toward the northwest, you run into Schlern mountain, which is the iconic peak that has kind of the rhino horn. If anybody's seen pictures of the Dolomites, you probably have seen a

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picture of the Schlern mountain too. And when you're up on Alpe di Siusi, you can hike all across the meadow and get up close with those peaks, which is pretty neat. But at the same time, you're not doing true mountain hiking. You're basically walking on a rolling field.

Katy

That sounds lovely and is a typical place where you'd start to hike that area and end it. Or is it a round trip? How does it work?

Kate

It's not so much a round trip. It's actually you can just kind of mosey around throughout the pasture as you would like. There's a lot of trails throughout, but you do actually take a cable car up to the top. So it's the Mont Sëuc cable car that's the best place to start. And then we typically then go to the village of Compatsch and so we typically recommend like four to six hours of exploring, having a little bit of lunch, having some drinks. That's usually a good amount of time to go and explore a fair amount of the a fair amount of the pasture.

Vin

Yeah, it's it's 20 by 20 square miles, I believe. And so but it's pretty much all open. So you can kind of wander as you please and not worry about getting lost because well the mountains are always your guide in the background. So if you know, unless, unless it's cloudy and then you might want a compass but are you can you can follow the mountains and know where you're at. Yeah. Our favorite hike is going across the alp to Compatsch and then we typically would come back the same route, but maybe take a side loop. It'll take you around another area. And then before we head back down into Ortisei and the cable car, we usually find a hut up there and stop and have dinner. So that's how we like to do it.

Katy

Sounds pretty good. And you don't need to be - you can be any level of fitness. How about if you've got mobility issues? You can still enjoy that one.

Vin

You can still enjoy it. You can actually. If you can't hike, you can book a carriage ride on a horse and buggy across the alp, which looks pretty romantic. And if you don't want to walk, but you'd rather roll, you can also rent mountain bikes up there and you bring those up on the lift with you.

Katy

And so how far is the lift from Ortisei to Compatsch?

Vin

So you take the lift from from Ortisei and you cross over a foot bridge straight from downtown Ortisei to the lift, you're going to want to buy a round trip ticket. I think it's 20 euros last time. So you're going to take that to the top of Alpe di Siusi and then you're actually going to walk towards Sassolungo and on your left, you're going to look over into the horizon. You'll see Seceda, also the Sella group. You can kind of see all these other mountain ranges that you're going to hit the next day, which is kind of neat once you're up there. But then you're walking around and it's probably a good four hours to Compatsch and back. And that's if you're not really lingering and taking photos or taking a little side tours. But when you come back, you hop back on the cable car and you're back down within a matter of minutes to Ortisei.

Katy

And what sort of cable? Look, I'm a little bit scared of heights. I'm just putting that out there. Is this is one of those ones that it's like - is it a pretty solid one?

Kate

It's very solid. I'm also afraid of heights. For what it's worth. I don't generally look down. I usually look up as we're going up and that's perfectly fine. You feel very safe. You feel very solid in there. So yeah, it's really not an issue. It's a very secure ride.

Katy

Yeah. And they running all throughout the day in summer. And you do happen to know I didn't ask you to prepare for this so if you don't know that's fine. But they don't run all year round do they, those cable cars. So there's definitely a season where you can go.

Vin

Right. We recommend going to avoid the crowds. The busy season, summer, obviously, but the cable cars begin operating at the end of May by, I would say, the first two weeks of June. They're all operating. So if you were to time your visit and you wanted to see more of spring summer, we recommend going at the end of May and the early part of June, and they're going to run, I think it's from 7:00 a.m. till 6:00 p.m., maybe even later in the summer. So pretty much all day the cable cars are running up and down. And if you get stuck up on a mountain, you can just spend the night at a hut up there and drink beer all night or drink wine. It's not the end of the world. And then the cable cars stop running towards the end of the season hiking season, which would be early October. So you don't have to visit the Dolomites and use the cable cars, but it makes it a lot easier. So we always recommend to try and check the schedules online because it'll change due to the weather and the season. But typically by the end of May, they're operating and stop operating by early October.

Katy

I'm guessing there's not just one cable company, though, is there?

Vin

No, I don't even know how many cable cars and lift stations are in South Tyrol, but it's pretty much every mountain it seems like you can find one.

Katy

Yeah, yeah. It can get pretty confusing as well to try and get that information. I know you have some great information on your website that we're going to share with everyone, because actually trying to find out the cable car information, I think I when I was trying to research our trip, I was just going crazy, going around in circles, trying to find out the right information.

Vin

Yeah, we have links, links on our website and then our materials to the lift schedules.

Katy

Oh brilliant. Yeah, like, seriously, everyone, it is like unless you have a PhD in Google, it's hard to find this stuff out. So I totally recommend Thrown and Vine because it's going to just speed up everything by about I don't know - about six weeks.

Vin

Glad to help.

Katy

Yeah, well, you really do. It's really worthwhile. All right. Well, that just sounds beautiful. I love the idea of that meadow and so maybe we take it up a notch. What's something maybe a little bit harder.

Kate

The next one that probably a little bit harder, not by much, but just a hair harder is going to be your Seceda hike. So that's another one where you're going to take a cable car up. We generally hike down from that point. But when you get to the top of it, it has these sawtooth, jagged peaks that are shooting into the air, which is really cool, and then a large cross at the very top for the summit. So it's a really cool spot. It's very inspiring when you get up there and see all this going on. And then there's typically a lot of paragliders who are flying around, too. So it's just kind of a really impressive sight when you first get to the very, very top. But that's probably that one has a little bit more hills involved. You may want

to bring hiking poles if you feel like you typically need them, but generally it's very well groomed trails. Again, very easy hiking for the most part.

Vin

Yeah, I would say Seceda is probably my favorite hike actually in the Dolomites. And again, for that one you can start out in Ortisei. The cable car is actually located on the opposite side of the cable car for Alpe di Siusi. And you take two cable cars up. And if you're going to hike back down, which we recommend to Ortisei, just buy a one way ticket, but then it takes you right up to the top. There's actually two cable cars. You change midway and then you grab another one, but it'll take you right to the Seceda ridge line. And you're walking along this ridge line and it looks like literally the end of the world on the other side. It just falls off in the clouds. And it's such an impressive hike because you have this meadow that runs right up to the edge of the mountain and then it just drops. It's a safe hike. But when you're taking photos and you send it to your friends and family, they think you're you're being quite the daredevil standing on edge of the world.

Vin

But that hike, as Kate said, is it's relatively easy. Where it does get grueling is on the way down. But we think it's really worth it because you can hike down to the oldest church in actually Val Gardena called Saint Jacob. And that was built in twelve seventy eight, I believe. And that set against the Sassolungo backdrop, which is on the opposite side of the valley. It's just a sight to behold. But on your way down from the ridgeline, we do recommend hiking poles because the first time we did it, we didn't have poles and by the time we got to the church, our knees were just pounding with pain. It's not dangerous, but it is steep for so long, just descending a mountain and you're on boulders and gravel trails. After a while, it does hurt.

Katy

Yeah, I'm just thinking, I guess the alternative to getting the cable car up there, because I guess you can probably get the cable car up and then just go straight back down again. But if you just want to see the view, because at the time when we were thinking of going back in 2020, I was looking at the cable cars weren't working, so I was looking at driving and it just looked really complicated to drive up to the top of these places as well - not much parking, is that right? A lot of the time.

Vin

Yeah, that is correct. I don't even know if you can bring a car up to Seceda. On Alpe di Siusi you can drive up - we have actually done that and you can approach Alpe di Siusi from several points. Our favorite is Ortisei cause you can take the cable car up from downtown, as we mentioned. But if you go to the town of Seis, which is I guess would be more west of Ortisei and actually the Alpe di Siusi region, you can drive a road up there and there's a

parking lot near Compatsch. Then you can hike from there and do a loop that way as well. It's actually if you have a rental car, it's actually cheaper to do that because I think to pay to park, it's 15 Euros. So you might save five dollars by doing that.

Katy

OK, good to know. Well, that's a spectacular one. That just sounds amazing. And so where to next? Where can we go next if we're getting really into these hiking and we're thinking, wow, I love these.

Vin

The next this is the most challenging hike of the ones that we're going to talk about. And this is actually the Sassolungo group, which I know we've mentioned previously. Probably all these names are getting confusing, but the Sassolungo group is the most massive that you can really see all of it on Alpe di Siusi. But this next hike, we're going to take you to the other side of the mountain. You're going to walk all the way around it. So you're still in Val Gardena. So all three of these sites, we should mention, are in Val Gardena. And if you're going to base yourself, I think Ortisie is a good town to base yourself in. If you want to stay at a farm, you have options to do that there. If you want to stay at a five star wellness resort, you can certainly do that to so pretty much any budget. You can find a place to stay in South Tyrol. Yeah. This next hike, it is, I think, 17 miles all the way around. And you're going to see the Sassolungo from every angle. And that's one of the really neat things about the Dolomites, is that few mountains allow you to really take it all in in the way the mountains are also constructed in South Tyrol, that you can get a 360 view of a lot of the peaks and they all look different. It's like they have different personalities, depending on where you are on the trail. But this hike, I would say, is, what, seven to eight hours? So you really want to plan a full day? We talk to some South Tyrolians and they said, oh, you can do that in six hours. They live in the mountains. So I'm sure they can for us. I would say for sure, seven, eight hours just to allow yourself. It's not a difficult hike in the sense you ever feel like you're in danger of slipping or anything like that? It's just it's a lot of ups and downs and some be rather steep, but it's well worth it because the views you get walking around Sassolungo are I would say probably the best in South Tyrol, because you get to see these peaks basically face to face and they skyrocket ten thousand feet to the air. And then you walk around another side and you can look over to your left. You see a giant glacier and an eleven thousand foot mountain. So you're surrounded by mountains all around on that hike and you probably get to see more peaks in that one hike than any other, I think in that role. As far as if for the Dolomites.

Katy

Yeah. Wow. And they've not covered in - they quite exposed aren't they, the peak. So that gives them that really dramatic look.

Vin

Yeah they call them the pale mountains because obviously in winter they're covered in snow. And if you go in the late spring and sometimes in the fall, you might come across some snow up there. But yeah, just the way the mountains are, they used to be a coral reef, apparently 30 million years ago, maybe was three hundred million, I don't remember. But a long time ago they were actually coral reefs in an ocean and they eventually emerge from the ocean and now the Dolomites today. That's why they don't look like any other mountain in the world. They're entirely different animal.

Katy

Wow, I didn't know that. That's so interesting. So and then you've got those mountains and a glacier as well. This is getting even more exciting. That's great.

Vin

Yeah. Well the glaciers on what they call the queen of the Dolomites. What's the name of that Marmolada.

Kate

Yeah. And that is actually the highest mountain in the Dolomites. And when you're hiking Sassolungo on the first leg of the hike is when you can walk right by it and really get a good view of the glacier. And if you've never seen a glacier, it's it's something that and I don't know if you can see it anywhere else in the Dolomites be honest.

Vin

Yeah. That's that's something to see. It's just such a huge contrast between all the gray stone around.

Katy

Yeah. Can you get up close to it?

Vin

You can. On a different hike. Not in that hike.

Katy

Because that's - I've actually seen one or two - there's two in New Zealand that I've seen and they are amazing and they just so massive.

Vin

Yeah. Yeah.

Katy

And it's quite confronting actually. You feel very small when you're standing next to them. I'm sure you get that feeling quite a lot in the Dolomites actually.

Vin

Yeah. You get that overwhelming feeling for sure.

Katy

I kind of like it because it's sort of like, well yeah, here we are, but we're still here and we were appreciating it. So that's an amazing thing that we can go halfway around the world and have this experience.

Kate

Absolutely.

Vin

And it'll be there long after we're gone.

Katy

Exactly. All right. So that's that one does sound really incredible. That hike - so seven to eight hours and I'm sure there's lots of Rifugios to stop at along the way.

Vin

Yes. The very first part of the hike is really tough. But thank God you get to the top and there's a mountain hut. What's it called? August, Fredrick.

Vin

August Friedrich, yeah.

Vin

And really nice place to stop. We've actually never eaten there because we go in the morning and so we just get something to drink. But if you continue on the hike for probably another two or three hours, you'll come to the far end of it before you begin the journey around. And there's a really nice hut there too, to have lunch. And that kind of gives you that extra energy for pushing through the rest of the hike.

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Vin

We recommend going clockwise. Some people say go counterclockwise on that hike. We say go clockwise because it's going to allow you to see the sunset over the mountains, especially the Sella group as you're walking across. I guess you see the back face of Sassolungo and you'll see a sunset unlike any other.

Katy

Oh, getting goosebumps. That sounds amazing. And you can get the glass of wine too there, I'm sure. And the beer or the beer.

Kate

Always. Yes.

Katy

So civilized isn't it?

Vin

Make sure you drink the right kind of wine. So when you're hiking they say you drink a Schiava, not a Lagrein because if you drink too much Lagrein they're going to carry you down the mountain.

Katy

Oh Well. We have to watch out for that one. Is that is that a red wine or a white one?

Vin

They're both red ones are really light kind of easy summer drinking wine and Legrein is definitely a full bodied red.

Katy

OK - that's very important to everyone because you don't want to be staggering down a mountain, literally.

Vin

We learned the hard way.

Katy

It sounds like you're speaking from experience there Vin.

Vin

Yes

Katy

Oh dear! I've got this in my head, so the people up there that are making these delicious lunches and breakfasts for you, do they live up there?

Kate

Yes, some of them do, actually. We actually on Alpe di Siusi, we met a family over there, it's Walter and Martina and they actually on the Malga Steger Hut on Alpe di Siusi where they raise their kids, their mother lives with them and they run the restaurant all from that same hut. And we even asked Walter what his favorite time of year was, and he said every day is the best day of his life because he gets to wake up on Alpe di Siusi overlooking the Dolomites. So, yes, there are people who live up there and it's just as amazing as you would expect.

Katy

Oh, I love. Oh, that's amazing. But so do they use most of the local products up there? Is that what happens? Because I can imagine it can be hard to get supplies very easily.

Vin

Yeah. So Walter, they grow almost all of their their own food up there for their restaurant. So it's really, truly mountain to table, I guess you could say. And it's probably some of the best farm fresh-food we've ever eaten, I would say is in the Dolomites and we live in Wisconsin right now, where we're surrounded by farms. But up there they know how to do it right. And I don't know - we probably never had a bad meal in South Tyrol. Of course, we're always usually starving by the time we get to a hut because we've been hiking for hours, so maybe every meal is good. But it is hard for them to get a lot of supplies sometimes, especially in bad weather.

Katy

Yeah, I just find it fascinating. And obviously, if you really want to try local food, then it can't get any better than that, really?

Kate

Yeah.

Katy

Fantastic. Now, did you have any other hikes you wanted to tell us about?

Kate

Those are the three big ones that we wanted to touch on - we really think that those are going to give you the the most bang for your buck, so to speak, with seeing some of the most incredible sights of the Dolomites all within the same geographic region. But there is another one that's kind of - another one of our favorites that's a little bit less well known. It's called Oachner Hofeweg and it's also a newer trail, but it takes you through a bunch of vineyards and you can also stop at - there's this little tiny little winery on there called Prackfolerhof where they also have some apartments that you can stay in. It's just a really charming trail that gives you the ability to see all different areas of the Dolomites. Well, maybe you're there during the Chestnut Festival and you can get to see some of the chestnuts that are falling from the trees onto the ground and see some of the fall colors. It's a really lovely trail, just a lot less well known, a little bit more unique.

Vin

Yeah.

Katy

That does sound pretty. And how long does that one take roughly?

Vin

It's a loop hike, so that's going to take probably a good portion of the day because there are taverns located on that trail as well, and that trail is located in Alpe di Siusi not Val Gardena, one of the taverns is the oldest in Alpe di Siusi and we actually did a Törggelen meal there. And Törggelen, I don't recall we talked about that in our last podcast, but that's a, I guess, a festival that takes place over the course of weeks. And the farmers are celebrating their new vintage and they serve it out to customers at their farmhouses in many cases. And you get a feast of a meat platter with all sorts of meats from speck to what else is on there.

Kate

You get to try the chestnuts.

Vin

The chestnuts. So anyway, it's a really fun time to go there and hiking that trail that time. Definitely worth partaking of Törggelen if you're going to do it.

Katy

Well, I know I'm really itching to go now. Like it's one of those things - like I do like hiking, but I'm not really like, you know, look, I don't go out every weekend to go hiking, but this is really got me thinking now, I would like to to get onto it. A bit of fresh mountain air.

Vin

You don't have to be a serious hiker to to enjoy these hikes that we've talked about the last hike the Sassolungo, that one you definitely want to be in shape for. You don't want to have an hour hike and then a 14 hour one. But for the most part, these hikes are for anybody. And that's one of the great things about the Dolomites, is that they are the mountains and just about anyone can enjoy because of their state-of-the-art lift system and the fact that they have I think it's thirty six hundred different trails. So you can definitely find a trail, virtually in any part of any region of the Dolomites that you could hike because they vary in difficulty. But a lot of them are geared towards families.

Katy

Yeah, OK, well that's great to know. But what if you're a really serious hiker and you really want to push yourself? I guess that's possible too.

Vin

For sure. We're more of the casual hiker. So our idea of a good hike is hike for two hours, glass of wine, hike another two hours, more wine and then maybe some food after that. But, yeah, there's definitely a lot of places in the Dolomites that if you're into mountaineering, some of the greatest mountaineers are from the from South Tyrol. And if you want to try any of that, too, there's there's places that will take you out so you're not alone. And will show you exactly how to go from the bottom of the mountain to the top of the mountain.

Katy

Yeah, OK. That's good to know. I mean, I think it's really important to research. And also, you mentioned a good point there about safety. Can you get mobile phone reception up on these mountains or is it something that we need to have a bit more of a think about letting people know when you going up there?

Kate

Yeah, we've actually been able to get cell service up at the top of the mountains typically, it's may not be your full 5G necessarily, but you are able to get a few bars there, because I know I've had a fair amount of times where I've had to track down Vin because he's slowly taking a photo out back behind me.

Vin

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That's all true. Yeah, in a lot of the huts, you can you can get on Wi-Fi if you needed to, so if there was ever any safety issue, there are certainly parts of the Dolomites where you can be really remote. But the trails that we discussed, you're going to have people nearby, I would say, within five minutes. So I don't see that really being an issue. As far as gear goes, I would recommend you're definitely going to want to have hiking boots because the ankle support you get with a boot versus a shoe. I think it's much more important when you're in a place like the Dolomite. I know some people that go to the Alpe di Siusi and they wear sandals and that's fine because if you're just taking a lift car up, if you just taking the lift car up and the lift car down, you're basically walking, a lot of times it's like you're on the street almost.

Katy

Yeah, probably not sandals. Probably not the best choice of footwear in the mountains.

Kate

Not really.

Vin

But you'll see it.

Katy

Yeah, I'm sure. I'm sure I did. You know that in the Cinque Terre they've actually banned people from hiking with flip flops.

Vin

Oh wow.

Katy

You can actually get a fine because they had so many rescue attempts, I think, from people that had seriously injured themselves on these rocky paths. So, yeah, I think I think you just need to be sensible about those things.

Vin

Yeah. I don't know why he would travel all that way to go hiking and choose to wear flip flops. If you want to wear flip flops, find a beach. In the mountains, out hiking boots. You can certainly wear shorts if you go like we recommend in late spring or early autumn, you're going to want to bring layers because the temps can go from they can go down to the 40s and all the way up to the 70s and also have rain gear. Usually you look at the forecast before you head out on a hike and trust it. But again, you're in the mountains and things can happen out of the blue up there. So we always just pack it and throw it in our backpack, whether it's a

rain poncho or a jacket, just because you never know. And we learned the hard way on that one, too.

Katy

Well, thanks for sharing that with us. So we don't make your mistakes so much. Appreciate it. All righty. So now I do have had you have another question for you. You've told us some amazing hikes. And I'm sure that when you can you want to go back there and experience things. But is there a hike that you haven't done yet that you're really wanting to do?

Kate

Yes. I mean, from my perspective, I really want to do Tre Cime - the three peaks. So we have not done that one yet. And that was one that's very iconic for the region. So that's one that I'm looking forward to doing. What about you Vin?

Vin

Oh, yeah. There's so many different trails that I want to do. And the unique thing is, like I said, you can go hike one side of a mountain and then there's a trail on the other side. So you get to see the mountain from a whole other angle. And we've only seen the Rosengarten peaks really from Alpe di Siusi. We haven't really had a chance to go to the other side, but we can see the back side of the Rosengarten and to really hike in front of it, really been meaning to do that, it's just it's one of those things - there's so much to explore. You just have to keep going back year after year.

Katy

Oh, what a shame. And so the ultimate question, are you going to make it there this year? That's my question.

Kate

We did book. So we are planning to go this fall. So hopefully there are no covid issues and we can plan on it. But we are planning - we are working on and planning our trip right now. So, yes, we are very hopeful.

Katy

That is so exciting. And it's really good news for everyone listening because like I mentioned before, Kate and Vin mean to put a lot of work and do very, very thorough research into creating Thrown and Vine, which is such a fantastically - just amazing resource for people who want to visit the Dolomites. And so can you tell us how they can find Thrown and Vine on the interweb?

Kate

Yes, we are at throneandvine.com, so you can check us out there. And yeah, we can also help with any questions that anybody has too. So feel free to reach out to us.

Vin

Yeah, we're on Instagram and Facebook and Twitter and Pinterest as well.

Katy

Yeah, it's brilliant. Actually, I was looking on your Instagram today and I saw one of the Rifugio and I was like, oh, I'm going to be talking about that today. Exciting.

Vin

Yes, we plan to re-visit that one.

Katy

That's a good one. Is that OK? Good to know! I mean, like, I can't stress this enough, the Italian language resources for this area are really not spectacular, unlike the Dolomites themselves, so if you need somewhere to go and you want to know how to approach exploring this area, please go check out Thrown and Vine because you really will get a lot of great information there. So Kate and Vin, this has been absolutely brilliant and I can't wait to see all the photos and everything that you're doing when you get back to Italy in September, because I believe this is going to happen. So Grazia!! Thank you so much for joining me on Untold Italy today.

Vin

Thank you. Great to be here!

Kate

Ciao.

Vin

Ciao

Katy

Ok, I think I'm ready to go hiking in the mountains now. Who's with me? Could there be anything better than breathing in that fresh mountain air and soaking up the incredible scenery? And then settling into a long lunch? It just sounds magnificent and is up at the top of my Italy wishlist

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Working out how to get around that area and how to make the most of your time can be very tricky. I think if you have a lot of time then obviously you can take it easy and explore but if you only have a few days or a week there you're really going to need to plan things out very carefully. I certainly found that myself when I was planning our ill fated 2020 trip. And it wasn't until I discovered, very late into our planning actually, that the chairlifts and cable cars weren't going to be running at that time, and then I changed tack completely. Because I absolutely wanted to have the experience of wandering in those mountain pastures.

This is definitely one part of Italy where insider knowledge is absolutely invaluable. So if you're keen to learn more about the northern region of South Tyrol and the Dolomites , then you'll want to visit Kate and Vin's website Throne and Vine where they share so many wonderful tips and ideas for your adventures in that area. Of course there's a link to their page and all the places mentioned on the show in our episode show notes at untolditaly.com/85 for episode 85

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Grazie! Thanks for listening as always! That's all for this week, keep dreaming of mountain pastures in Italy, and we'll be back next week with another fun episode of Untold Italy but until then it's "ciao for now"