

Hotels by Design

MOUNTAIN HIGH

**LISA JOHNSON HEADS TO SOUTH TYROL FOR DRAMATIC PEAKS,
GENTLE VALLEYS AND SOPHISTICATED ACCOMMODATION
THAT COMBINES ITALIAN STYLE WITH TYROLEAN COMFORT**

PHOTOGRAPHS DEAN HEARNE



The main hiking loop through the austere terrain of the Three Peaks nature park, part of the Unesco World Heritage region of the Dolomites



FROM FAR LEFT Once owned by a 16th-century bishop, the White Deer San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge overlooks the Puster Valley. The Slim Aarons-influenced pool area at Villa Arnica in Lana features retro-inspired parasols and sun loungers on a secluded terrace. At its sister hotel, 1477 Reichhalter, meals take place in the *stube*. Traditional farmhouse decoration at the White Deer



The mix of Mediterranean and Alpine elements is also South Tyrol's richness



THIS PICTURE Rattan chairs and lampshades bring a relaxed, rustic touch to Villa Arnica's pool house. RIGHT One of six suites at the hotel, which combines elegant interiors with vintage detailing



High in the Dolomites, the Three Peaks of Lavaredo tower over the landscape, rising up, pale and jagged as teeth, to 2,999 metres. At the top of the easternmost peak, an ant-like climber clings to the rock as an afternoon mist descends; to the south, a river snakes through larch and spruce to a sapphire lake. It is an astonishingly beautiful panorama, and driving through South Tyrol reveals many more.

If the province is uncommonly beautiful, it is also unusually complex. Annexed by Italy after the First World War, it is now bilingual, with 70 per cent of the population speaking German and 25 per cent Italian (the other five per cent use the Romance language Ladin). Italians call it the Alto Adige, and the road signs can be confusing. Yet the mix of Mediterranean and Alpine is also South Tyrol's richness – the food and wine are among Europe's best.

It certainly captivated Stefano Barbini, who grew up on the shores of Lake Maggiore and travelled the world as regional CEO of German fashion brand Escada. But he holidayed here as a child and, when he and his wife Giorgia had their own children, they bought and restored a remote 16th-century bishop's hunting lodge outside San Lorenzo di Sebato, now available to rent on an exclusive-use basis.

The White Deer is an elegant take on the vernacular, with an interior that revolves around its *stube* (parlour). As well as four rooms, one with four cupboard bunks, it has a sauna and bucket shower, an outdoor pool overlooking the Puster Valley and a wine cellar, where we drink a delicious bottle of Arunda Brut Rosé. Giorgia's cooking is superb, incorporating mushrooms foraged by Stefano, who takes us hiking in the Three Peaks, and sends us off for lunch at AlpiNN, on the 2,275-metre summit of the popular Kronplatz (Plan de Corones) ski area.

Reached by cable car and appearing to float over the mountains, this exciting new restaurant from Norbert Niederkofler is hosted by his wife Christine. The food by Fabio Curreli focuses on local ingredients, adhering to the same 'Cook-the-Mountain', zero-waste philosophy as Norbert's three-Michelin-starred St Hubertus 50km to the south. The new Lumen Museum of Mountain Photography is in the same building, while MMM Corones – one of six museums founded by the mountaineer Reinhold Messner, who grew up here and was the first person to climb Everest solo – is just across the summit in a building by Zaha Hadid that slices dramatically through the rock.

There is a fast road from here but it's worth taking the longer one via the Gardena or Sella Pass – the scenery is breathtaking. Either will take you to the provincial capital of Bolzano and the South Tyrol Museum of Archaeology, home to Ötzi the Iceman, the 5,300-year-old mummy discovered in 1991, protruding from the glacier near the Tisenjoch Pass. On the other side of Bolzano, midway along



FROM TOP AlpiNN, the new restaurant from Norbert Niederkofler, enjoys a dramatic setting on the summit of the Plan de Corones (Kronplatz) ski area. A wooden turret adds a traditional Tyrolean touch in Val de Gardena. Another of the stylish suites at Villa Arnica, with an original parquet floor. The chic sitting room at Villa Baronessa, which offers an ideal base to explore South Tyrol's wine route



THIS PAGE Fresh tagliolini with porcini mushrooms, chanterelles and Trentingrana cheese is one of the dishes at new restaurant AlpiNN, which focuses on local ingredients in the spirit of owner Norbert Niederkofler's 'Cook-the-Mountain' philosophy. OPPOSITE The Japanese onsen and relaxation deck at the Miramonti Boutique Hotel in Avelengo is linked by wooden walkways to a floating sauna

*The food and wine of South Tyrol
are among Europe's best*





CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT The Messner Mountain Museum on the summit of Plan de Corones (Kronplatz) is housed in a striking building designed by Zaha Hadid. Chef Fabio Curreli and host Christine Lasta at restaurant AlpiNN. The village church in the town of Kaltern on the South Tyrol wine route. Guests can enjoy spectacular views of the mountains from the infinity pool at the Miramonti Boutique Hotel, high up above Merano



the wine route, is the Villa Baronessa, a peaceful base for tasting South Tyrol's DOC wines. Overlooking vineyards to the Kalterer See (Lago di Caldaro), this renovated Twenties villa sleeps 10 and has a sibling, the Baronessina, which sleeps four to six. Both are the work of architect Walter Angonese and artist Manfred Alois Mayr, with colours inspired by the surrounding landscape.

There are more vines 30km north in Lana, a serene town in the Adige Valley, which, until two years ago, was best known for its apples. Then local hotelier Klaus Dissertori took over 1477 Reichhalter, a well-loved restaurant in the centre and, teaming up with the architect Zeno Bampi, designer Christina Biasi-von Berg and chef Andreas Heinisch, produced an enchanting little hotel that mixes bygone charm with understated interiors. As well as eight uncluttered bedrooms with vintage fixtures, it has a restaurant that serves impeccable Mediterranean/Alpine sharing platters, and an honesty bar en route to a tiny roof terrace. It's hard to imagine anything more perfect. But then I visit the Villa Arnica, the hotel's new sister property, set in leafy gardens with views of the mountains, and fall in love all over again. With its ochre façade, 10 elegant, contemporary rooms, Slim Aarons-inspired pool and tea in the vintage *salotto*, it offers the epitome of *la dolce vita*.

Lana is only 10km from the spa town of Merano, from which the road winds steeply up to Hafling (Avelengo) and a Romanesque church. Higher still, at 1,230 metres, is the 44-room Miramonti Boutique Hotel, which local couple Klaus Alber and Carmen Kruselburger have worked hard to update, introducing designer lofts and a Nordic spa with a spectacular infinity pool, all by architects Andreas Zanier and Heike Pohl of Merano-based practice Tara. The new Sky House (a black larch-clad cube hanging off the porphyry rock face), fitness studio, and Japanese-style onsen, linked by wooden walkways to a floating sauna, are exciting additions. The focus is firmly on wellness here: skiing, hiking, eating well and healthily, and most of all relaxing – gazing at the clouds and mountains, or at the twinkling lights of Merano below. After morning yoga, I go for a walk in the forest behind the hotel, where a hushed lily pool feels enchanted, like a wood between the worlds. As a sign in the Sky House says: Getting fit has never felt so fabulous □

Exclusive use of the White Deer San Lorenzo Mountain Lodge, from €2,300 a night for a three-night minimum (sanlorenzolodges.com). One week at Villa Baronessa, from €4,480, and at Villa Baronessina, from €2,950 (villabaronesa.it). Doubles from €210 a night at 1477 Reichhalter (1477reichhalter.com), €310 a night at Villa Arnica (villaarnica.it) and €244 at the Miramonti Boutique Hotel (hotel-miramonti.com), all B&B. For more details on the region, visit suedtirool.info/en