

Dolomites & Stelvio

Stelvio, Mortirolo, Giau, Campolongo, Sella: ride all these and more in this tantalising road cycling holiday in the iconic Dolomites, northern Italy

Summary

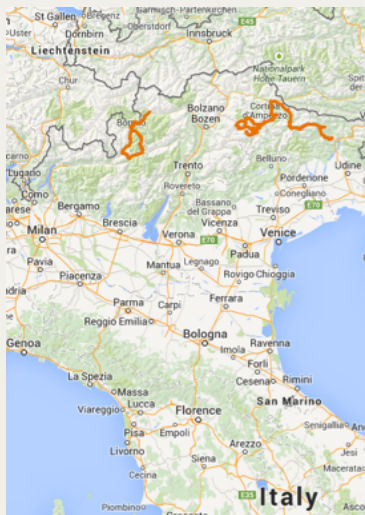
WHERE: Dolomites, Italy

DISTANCE: to suit you

TIME : 6 days

PRICE : see website

DATES: Jun to Aug



Highlights

Flexible itinerary to suit everyone

Giro passes: Stelvio, Giau, Mortirolo & Gavia

Ride the route of the Maratona sportive

3 & 4* hotels with delicious Italian cuisine

2 customised support vehicles & experienced, energetic guides



Dolomites & Stelvio Classics

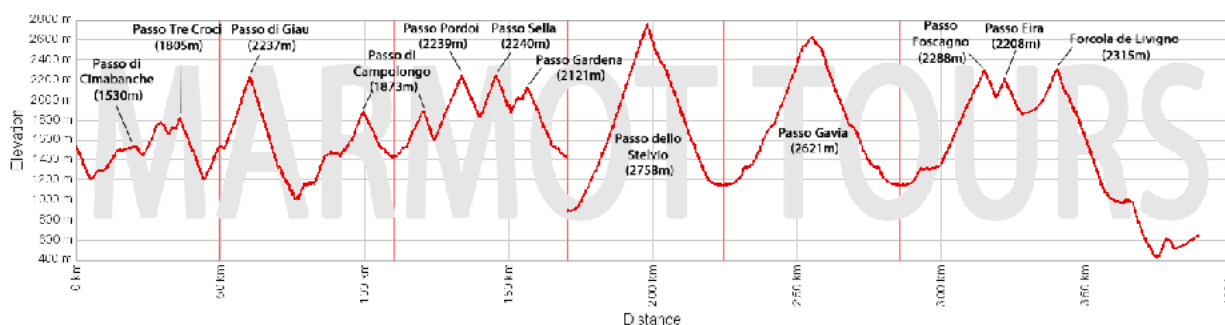
Made famous by the Giro d'Italia, the Dolomites is one of the world's greatest places to ride a bike. This holiday has it all: epic climbs, breathtaking scenery, cyclist friendly Italian food, nice hotels and excellent support from two Marmot guides & vans.

Spend 5 days traversing the Dolomites (east - west) before transferring to Bormio for the Stelvio and Mortirolo. Every road leads to another exquisite climb, each with its own character and several made famous by the Maratona dles Dolomiti cyclo-sportive. The Classic Route is manageable and enjoyable for most cyclists if taken steadily but each day there are 'optional extras' building up to the Challenge route - so this holiday is also suitable for those looking to really push themselves. You really can ride as much or as little as you like, at a pace that suits you without holding up or being held up by others in the group.

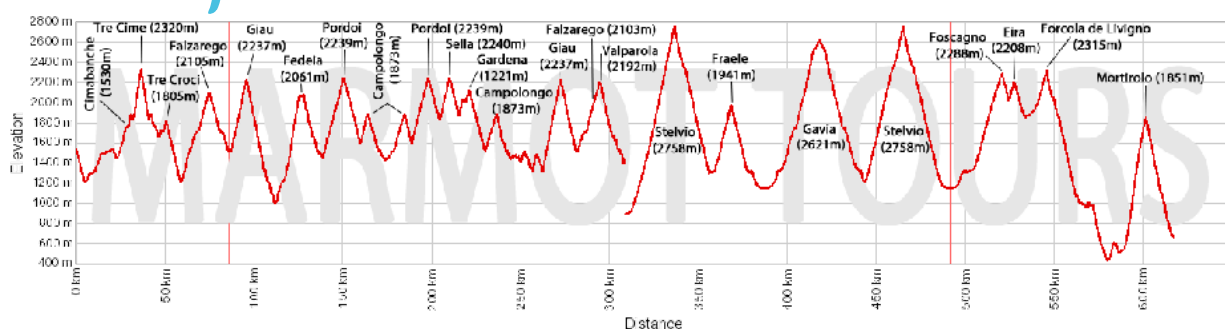
Whether you opt for the Classic or Challenge route (or a mix) this week is a 'holiday'; riding your bike through the Dolomites and Stelvio National Parks is a real joy. This plus some good company, comfortable hotels and the delicious local Italian cuisine all make for an excellent week.

We also offer Classic Cols holidays in the Alps, Pyrenees and Picos as well as in Andalusia, Catalonia, Provence, Cevennes & Ardeche, Sardinia and Corsica - please [check our website](#) for more details.

Classic Route



Challenge Route



Itinerary

Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included airport transfers (a journey of about 2hrs) at scheduled times during the day from Venice Marco Polo Airport to our start hotel in the lush green meadows of the lower slopes of the famous Passo Falzarego, just above the vibrant town of Cortina.

Once checked in, you'll assemble your bikes and share a hearty meal in preparation for the adventure ahead!

Day 1: Tour of Monte Cristallo

Start the holiday with a gentle descent to the historic town of Cortina. Heading out onto the gently-sloped forested roads that encircle the towering peaks of the majestic Monte Cristallo, you summit the comparatively diminutive **Passo di Cimabanche (1530m)** as you go. A brief descent sees you climbing up to **Lago di Misurina**. In summer the lake is a great spot for sitting in a lounge, ice cream in hand, people watching.

The horizon is dominated by the iconic mountain of the Tre Cime di Lavaredo, which may lure you in if you fancy taking on the steep road to the **Rifugio Aronzo (2362m)**. An exhilarating descent brings you back down to just above the lake and onto the gentle gradients of the eastern side of the **Passo Tre Croci (1802m)**.

Rounding off the ride, you descend back down to Cortina d'Ampezzo before ticking off the first 5km of the **Passo Falzarego**, to return to your hotel.

Now you have the choice of exploring the cosmopolitan town of Cortina or, should you wish to push yourself further, there is always the option of continuing on past the hotel and up to the summit of **Passo Falzarego (2105m)**. You've already done the first 5km, so why not?

Classic Route

Passo di Cimabanche + Passo Tre Croci
[50km with 1050m ascent]

Challenge Route

Passo di Cimabanche + Rifugio Aronzo + Passo Tre Croci + Passo Falzarego
[87km with 2310m ascent]



Day 2: The classic duo - Passo di Giau & Passo di Campolongo

Today is all about towering peaks, lush meadows and big views. You conquer the mighty **Passo di Giau (2237m)** from the north, one of THE classic climbs of the area. Apart from a (very) short section of downhill half way up, it is relatively gruelling!

From the top, descend to Caprile and choose whether to deviate onto a testing, yet rewarding loop that takes in the somewhat savage gradients of the **Passo Fedaia (2057m)** from the east, and then on to the somewhat kinder **Passo Pordoi (2239m)** with its 27, yes, 27, switchbacks!

A slightly less challenging option would be to meander uphill on the Classic route, up to and over the **Passo di Campolongo (1873m)** from the south. Regardless of your choice, La Villa is a great place to enjoy the atmosphere of the Dolomites and we stay here for two nights.

Classic Route

Giau + Campolongo [66km with 2000m ascent]

Challenge Route: Giau + Fedaia + Pordoi + Campolongo [92km with 3050m ascent]

Day 3: Martian Routes from La Villa

The Maratona dles Dolomiti is one of the world's greatest cyclosporives and happens to start in La Villa. Given the scenery, the number of legendary climbs and the quality of the roads, it is not surprising that it is so popular (it sells out in

hours). Today you get to take part in the Marmot Tours version of this great event - the roads may not be closed but without thousands of other cyclists about you will be able to appreciate the scenery. Stopping off in cafes/restaurants is positively encouraged - you are on holiday after all!

Have a look at the Maratona website for full details of the event, history, maps, profiles etc. However, these are the routes (and stats) for you to choose from:

Sellaronda Course: 55km with 1780m ascent
Passo di Campolongo (1875m) from the north, **Passo Pordoi (2239m)** from the east, **Passo di Sella (2244m)** from the south and the **Passo di Gardena (2121m)** from the west.

Middle Course: 106km with 3130m ascent
Passo di Campolongo (1875m) from the north, **Passo Pordoi (2239m)** from the east, **Passo di Sella (2244m)** from the south and the **Passo di Gardena (2121m)** from the west, back up the north side of the **Passo di Campolongo (1875m)** and finishing off with the south side of the **Passo di Valparola (2192m)**.

Maratona Course: 138km with 4230m ascent
Passo di Campolongo (1875m) from the north, **Passo Pordoi (2239m)** from the east, **Passo di Sella (2244m)** from the south and the **Passo di Gardena (2121m)** from the west, back up the north side of the **Passo di Campolongo (1875m)**. From here you take on the western face of the **Passo Giau (2237m)** and finish off with the **Passo di Valparola (2192m)** from the east!

Day 4: Transfer to Prato del Stelvio and ride to Bormio

Recover a little during the 3hr transfer today, though before you know it you will be back on the bike and counting off all 48 hairpins of the infamous **Passo dello Stelvio (2758m)** from the east.

Starting steeply, it continues in the same vein, ending in the iconic switchbacks up to the pass. Celebrate your climb with a photograph, a hot dog, a tacky gift and a very rewarding descent all the way to your hotel in Valdisotto, just outside Bormio.

En-route to the hotel you have the choice of ticking off a less well-known but equally impressive and hairpin-littered local favourite of a climb, the **Torri di Fraele (1941m)** (Torri being Italian for towers built here in 1391).

Classic Route

Stelvio east [54km with 1875m ascent]

Challenge Route

Stelvio east + Torri di Fraele
[79km with 2550m ascent]

Day 5: Day ride from Bormio including the Gavia and Stelvio

Passo Gavia (2621m) has been stirring things up in the Giro d'Italia since it was first introduced in 1960. With its summit breaking through the clouds at a lofty 2621m and with an overall elevation gain from Bormio of over 1400m, you are sure to be rewarded with epic views over the glaciers of the Stelvio National Park as you twist and turn your way up this narrow mountain road.

Descending back down to Bormio, should you feel as though your appetite for altitude is yet to be satisfied, there is the option of ticking the **Passo Dello Stelvio (2758m)** box once and for all by taking on this infamous climb once more, this time from the south side. Having descended this road the previous day, you'll be well aware of the challenge ahead, but rest assured you'll be rewarded with an entirely different perspective as your journey to the top is likely to be a touch more leisurely (!) than yesterday's descent!

Classic Route

Gavia [62km with 1500m ascent]

Challenge Route

Gavia + Stelvio - South [104km with 3050m ascent]

Day 6: Livigno & Mortirolo finale!

The western approach to the **Passo di Mortirolo (1851m)** was described by Lance Armstrong as the 'hardest climb he had ever ridden'. It does however seem a fitting end to your week in this amazing part of the world and is certainly another one ticked off your list of 'really tough climbs'. As always there are options.

With the **Passo Foscagno (2288m)** and **Passo Eira (2208m)** under your belt you take a brief excursion into Switzerland and enjoy a near 30km descent down the Poschiavo Valley before crossing back into Italy again, emerging at the base of the infamous **Passo del Mortirolo (1852m)**. The Classic route continues on up the valley and past the base of the Mortirolo along to our final destination of Grosio.

For those with something left in their legs, you turn a sharp right just before Mazzo di Valterrina to begin your assault on altitude! With an average gradient of 10.5% over 12km length and a maximum kick of 18%, the Mortirolo is a fitting finale to the week.

Whatever you do, tonight a celebration is in order - what an amazing week of cycling!!!

Classic Route

Foscagno + Eira [106km with 2200m ascent]

Challenge Route

Foscagno + Eira + Mortirolo
[129km with 3500m ascent]

Shorter Route

Mortirolo [53km with 1350m ascent]



Day 7 - Travel Back

We offer included transfers from Grosio to Milan Malpensa airport, a journey of approx. 3hrs - please read on in our travel section for more details.



Start & End

Start: [Hotel Villa Argentina](#), 32043 Cortina d'Ampezzo, Italy (+39 0436 5641)

End: [Hotel Sassella](#), Via Roma, 2, 23033 Grosio, SO, (+39 0342 847272)

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to VCE'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving into Venice a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling. It is very easy to extend this holiday - Venice is a lovely city to explore and there are a number of hotels which offer complimentary airport transfers (it's a searchable option on booking.com).

Venice is very accessible by public transport with many busses, trains and water busses. If you don't like the thought of lugging your bike box around with you, Venice airport does have a left luggage facility which accepts bikes.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from Venice Marco Polo airport (VCE) to the start hotel (2 hours), and from the end hotel to Milan Malpensa airport (MXP) (around 3 hours) are included in the trip price.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the [Holiday Details](#) page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Navigation

We provide you with colour maps and altitude profiles, as well as detailed directions of where to go. Our guides will even aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions and as you will see the van and guides regularly, navigation does not tend to be a problem.

For those of you with GPS units, we have GPS files available and will post them on The Link a few weeks before departure, in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

Am I Fit Enough?

It is normal (and only right) that you should consider whether or not you are fit enough for a cycling holiday in the mountains.

We have created our Classic Cols range of holidays in order to open up the world of road cycling in the mountains to those who may not have experienced it before. Our itinerary warms you up gently to the altitude, the extended climbing and to the technique of descending.

Our Classic Route is an achievable goal for regular and fit cyclists who have never climbed a mountain on a bike before, though we would suggest starting with our Pyrenean itinerary, which has even more route options available. Our vehicles and guides are on hand to support you on your holiday and can offer advice, moral support and lifts in the van if you are tired.

Other holidays where the Classic route is considered 'easier' are the Classic Cols of Catalonia, Sardinia, Corsica, Cevennes & Ardeche and Ventoux & the Verdon Gorge (although if you like to test yourself, their Challenge routes certainly pack a punch!)

Our goal at Marmot Tours is to create an ambience of non-competitive cycling with no pressure to keep up with anyone else. It is about achieving your own individual goals and having a fabulous time doing it.

Am I too fit?

We have designed our Classic Cols style holidays to be accessible to a wide range of riding ability. Having a quick peek at each day's stats for the Challenge route should reassure you that even if you are a very fit and experienced road cyclist, there will be plenty to entertain you on this holiday.

With our daily route options you have the opportunity to cycle all day long, making yourself very tired indeed! If you do our Challenge Route each day then you are looking at 629km with 18690m of ascent for the week, which is comparable to our Raid trips and the Challenge routes of the Southern Alps and Picos.

What is so nice about this range of holidays is that you can come along with people who are either less or more experienced than you and you can each get out of it what you want by choosing the daily route for you.

Pacing and Training

As with all sports holidays, the fitter you are, the more you can relax and enjoy the stunning route.

It can be difficult to find extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your comfort on the bike (ideally on consecutive days) and your stamina and cardiovascular fitness overall, then you will really benefit when it comes to the holiday itself.

As well as training before the holiday, pacing yourself will go a long way towards you achieving your goals. The joy of a group holiday is that you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner/friend/room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going.

We can't emphasise enough that this is your holiday and so, if you want a lift up the hill for whatever reason, your guides will be happy to help.



Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, training and to compare themselves to their peers.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to focus on the road at all times.

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, climbs are not particularly steep (compared to a lot of hills in the UK) but they do go on for a very long time. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.

Guiding

"They really did make the trip a huge success, and added to the experience. Always there when we needed them, nothing was ever too much. Thanks fellas, we had a blast!" L Smith

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace with a level of independence on this holiday. One van stays on the Classic route and one van covers the Challenge route. Due to the distances involved, those cyclists doing the full challenge route may need to be more independent than those on the Classic Route. Our guides are experts at advising you on the routes, where you can expect to see the van, and what you might need with you.

In the event that you need help for a mechanical issue (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 2 - 4 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

"Great to have had such excellent and good-humoured back up, without ever feeling pressured, molly-coddled or patronised" J Burke

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we get a really big variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

We stay in a selection of 3 and 4* hotels with en suite facilities. The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. We're in Italy, so expect continental style breakfasts with cheese & meats for your protein kick start. We also supplement the breakfasts with cereals and fruit.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables: Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19:30. Wine at dinner is included, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.

What's Included?

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- 7 nights half board accommodation including wine at dinner
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water



Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built, titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online. Receive a confirmation email.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our [cancellation policy](#).

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude with the following fairly standard inclusions:

- Medical Expenses
- Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

- Cancellation cover
- Loss or damage to their bike

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine
- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500).

