

A DOLOMITE WALK ALT VIA 2

September 2015

*Journal of Dave
Fisher*

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1.0 Introduction

This year's trip with Jim Cunningham was back to the Dolomites it had been 5 years since we had been there. In 2010 we had walked the Alt Via 1 route, this year we decided to walk the Alt Via 2.

Jim and I had for the last few years organised and carried out a long distant walks abroad. Last year 2014 we went to the Pyrenees walking first from the French side up into the mountains then from the Spanish side. A little frustrating as the availability of mountain huts is not as good as in the Alps or the Italian Dolomites. It was made interesting for the both of us when we **visited a caving system that we both as keen cavers in the 60's and 70's** had been on an expedition to. This was the Pier St Martin system in which is one of the largest caverns in the world called the Sal Verna. The French built a tunnel into the cavern from which we had emerged after an 8 kilometre trip from an upper entrance. This tunnel is now open to the public and the Sal Verna illuminated, it is well worth a visit the cavern size is 250 metres diameter 194 metres high. On our previous visit with only carbide lights we could only see a cone of 10 feet in front of you.

This can be viewed on the web site:

<http://www.laverna.fr/presentation-108.html>



Inside the Sal Verna



The Tunnel Entrance

2.0 Planning

We followed a pattern that we had used on previous a trip; that is to go at the back end of summer, early September is our preferred time. The huts are quieter and we usually have no problem with getting accommodation. Jim books flights which he does well in advance, this was done in May. We flew out on Monday the 7th September and returned on Friday the 19th September. I look after transport once in Italy and booked the first and last night accommodation, also the first nights hut. I obtain all the maps required I already had the guide book which is **the 'Cicerone Trecks in the Dolomites Alt Via 1 and 2'**. The maps I bought were Tabacco 1:25,000 sheets 030, 07, 015, 022, 023.

We decided to fly to Verona from Manchester by Monarch not the cheapest way but the most convenient; also that we would have a few days on Lake Garda and a couple of days in Verona after the walk. I found details of the train journey from Verona to Bressanone and the local bus that would take us to our start point. I research and found out the return details that would take us to Garda on Lake Garda. The hotel in Verona I booked for the night we arrived and the night before we departed was the Hotel Scalzi, just 6 minutes from the rail station.

3.0 Gear

We took only walking gear as we anticipated that we would need no specialised kit. Our plan was to stay in mountain huts or hotels at the major passes we would travers; so no tents or sleeping gear would be required. Meals and food would available at the huts this meant that we had light packs about 12kg including water.

I took 680 euros to pay for the mountain hut accommodation as most do not except credit cards: this turned out not to be enough which affected our planning on the trip. Note: For members of the Austrian Alpine Club which I am, significant discounts are available in the CIA huts, usually not in the private run huts.

4.0 Overview of trip (see Fig 1)

We flew to Verona from Manchester, caught the airport bus to the rail station in Verona; then we fumbled our way to the hotel. The following morning we walked back to the railway station and caught a train to Bressanone. A local bus took to the start of our walk in the foothills of the Dolomites. For the next 6 days we followed the Alt Via 2 route tracking south to a Passo Rolle. Local buses took us to Trento and a train back to Verona, then by bus to Garda on Lake Garda where we spent 2 days. Our last 2 days was spent at Verona then a flight back to Manchester.

Overview of trip

➔ Fly ➔ Rail ➔ AV2 ➔ Bus ★ R&R

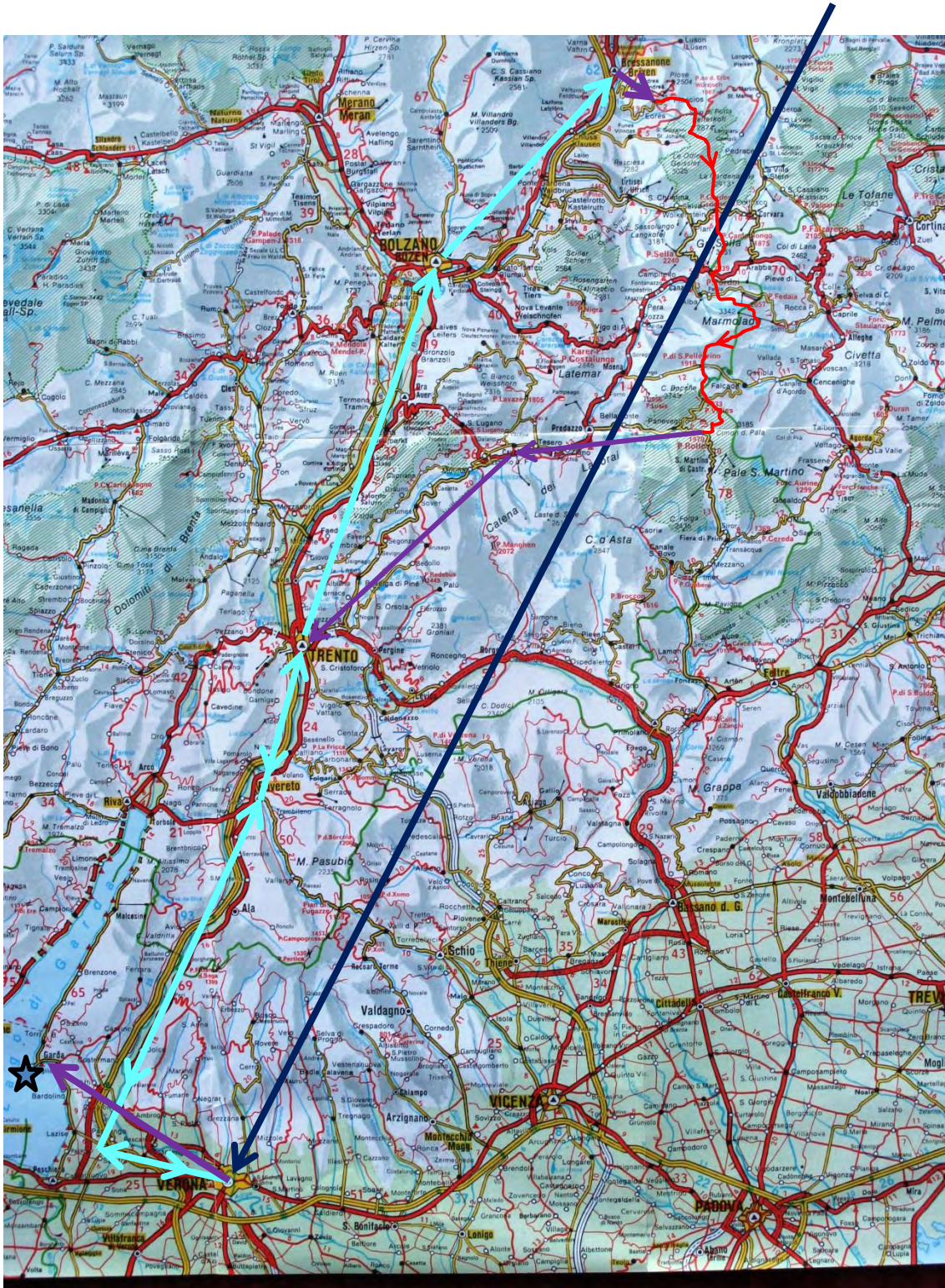


Fig 1

5.0 Daily Log

Day 1 Mon 7th Sept.

Our flight time from Manchester to Verona on Monarch Airline was 15-50; I caught the train from Poulton direct to Manchester Airport. Arriving in good time I met up with Jim in the booking hall then the usual cramming as much gear as possible into one sack, mine; this would go in the hold. This allowed Jim to retain his sack as hand luggage so he could safely carry his 2 expensive cameras plus my cheaper one. Jim is a very good photographer, a winner of many competitions.

The flight left and arrived on time at 19-20 local time, we located the **airport bus that drop us off at the rail station in Verona at a cost of €6 each.** Following a city map and with some local assistance we found our hotel the Scalzi.

After checking in we sorted our gear then went out in search of food, close by we found a German restaurant. A large helping of spare ribs was had by both of us, messy but tasty and went well with the red wine. A short walk after took us to the centre of Verona the square where the Roman Amphitheatre is, here we finished the evening in an outside café.

Day 2 Tues 8th Sept.

In good weather we walked from the hotel to the rail station now we knew the way it took us only 7 minutes. We had decided to catch the 9.04 train to Bressanone this would give us 15 minutes wait for the local bus that would take to the start of our walk. This was an interesting train journey, east from Verona for about 20k then north up the Brenner Pass for 170k to Bressanone or Brixen in German. The whole of this region was Austrian before the First World War but was ceded to Italy after the end of the war. This was much to the dislike of the majority of the population. Arriving on time at 11-0am we searched and found the bus stop, an electronic display showed our bus number, 329 and that it was on time.

From our first Tabacco map sheet 030 we could see that our destination on the bus was the village Placious. (Palmschoss in German) When the bus arrived I showed the driver the map, pointing out our destination, this he confirmed and took our money. The bus was full, mainly local walkers going for the day out. Very quickly we climbed up through the foothills of the Dolomites stopping at a large car park here **everyone** de-bused, we did the same.

Scanning the map I could not reconcile our position to the place we should have been, nothing matched or made any sense. We were in a large car park with many people, cafes and shops. At the far end was a ski lift which was operating taking people further up the mountain. Consulting with a local inside a shop he pointed out where we were; miles from where we should have been. A quick appraisal, our route decided; onto the ski lift this would drop us at a track that would take us to our route to the hut and our first nights stop.



Fig 2 **On the lift**

An hour later 150m lower we were on our route, dropping lower to the bottom of the valley at 1868m we started to climb up to Forcela de Putia at 2357m. Half an hour later we arrived at our first hut Rifugio Genova, confident that we had a reservation I booked in with the warden. Consulting his book he shook his head as he could not find my name, still confident I gave him his e-mail confirmation. He started laughing then declared that the hut name was correct but the hut I had booked was in the far north west of Italy in the Maritime Alps near Genova. No problem though they had vacancies, we were allocated bunks in a small room.

The bunk room was almost full accommodating up to 8 persons in the usual continental mode of mixed sexes. At the evening meal which is invariably good and nourishing this one was no different; the cost was €40 for both of us. We planned our next day's walk which would take us to Passo Gardena we asked Martin the warden to book us into the Rifugio Berghaus which is attached to the Hotel Fara.

➡ Bus ➡ Walk Planned route 🚩 ⋯➡



Fig 3 **First days walk**

Day 3 Wed 9th Sept.

In good weather we left Rifugio Genova at 8-0am heading south our destination for the day was Passo Garden some 17kl distance and many metres of climbing. Our first objective Forcella Della Roa a climb of 448m, from hear 2 alternatives are shown in the *Cicerone* guide book we took the recommended one. This was the wrong decision as it added 3k and 367m of climbing, eventually we reached Rifugio Puez where we stopped for a bite and a beer.



Fig 4 **Forcella Dela Roa 2617m**

On over **Forcella's de Ciamper and Crespeina** we finally dropped down to Passo Gardena and quickly found the Rifugio Berghaus which is part of the Hotel Fara. Here we had a dormitory to ourselves and our first shower of the walk, a good evening meal and a few beers.

Route taken

Preferred Route



Fig 5. **Second days walk**

Day 4 Thurs 10th Sept.

Lack of cash was becoming a potential problem, mountain huts usually **require payment by cash; a typical overnight stay was costing €150.** Forward projection of our total cash available would mean that we would run out. The availability of cash machines in this area is non-existent. We decided **where possible** to stay in hotels this we thought would be possible as our route would take us over major passes **where** hotels **where** located.

Another early start up at 7-0 am for breakfast then on the road at 8-15 am, Today we would walk across the Sella Gruppen, our objective Passo Podoi. We had decided not to bother booking ahead as there seemed to be so few people walking the route. Our objective Passo Podori a distance of 10k with some sections of via ferrata which we expected not to be too technical, we had not brought any specialist gear. The first objective was Rifugio Pisciadu at 2585m a climb of 464m over the technical bits which were not difficult at all.



Fig 6. **Scramble**

On next to Rifugio Boa at 2871m where we had a bite to eat and a drink, staying at around this height we arrived at Rifugio Forcella Pordoia at 2829m. A steep drop in deteriorating weather, flex of snow in the air took us down to Passo Poroi at 2242m. Here we found the Hotel Savoia where we stayed for €65 each for the night, in the bar later with a beer, outside thunder and lightning as it put a lot of snow down.

Scramble

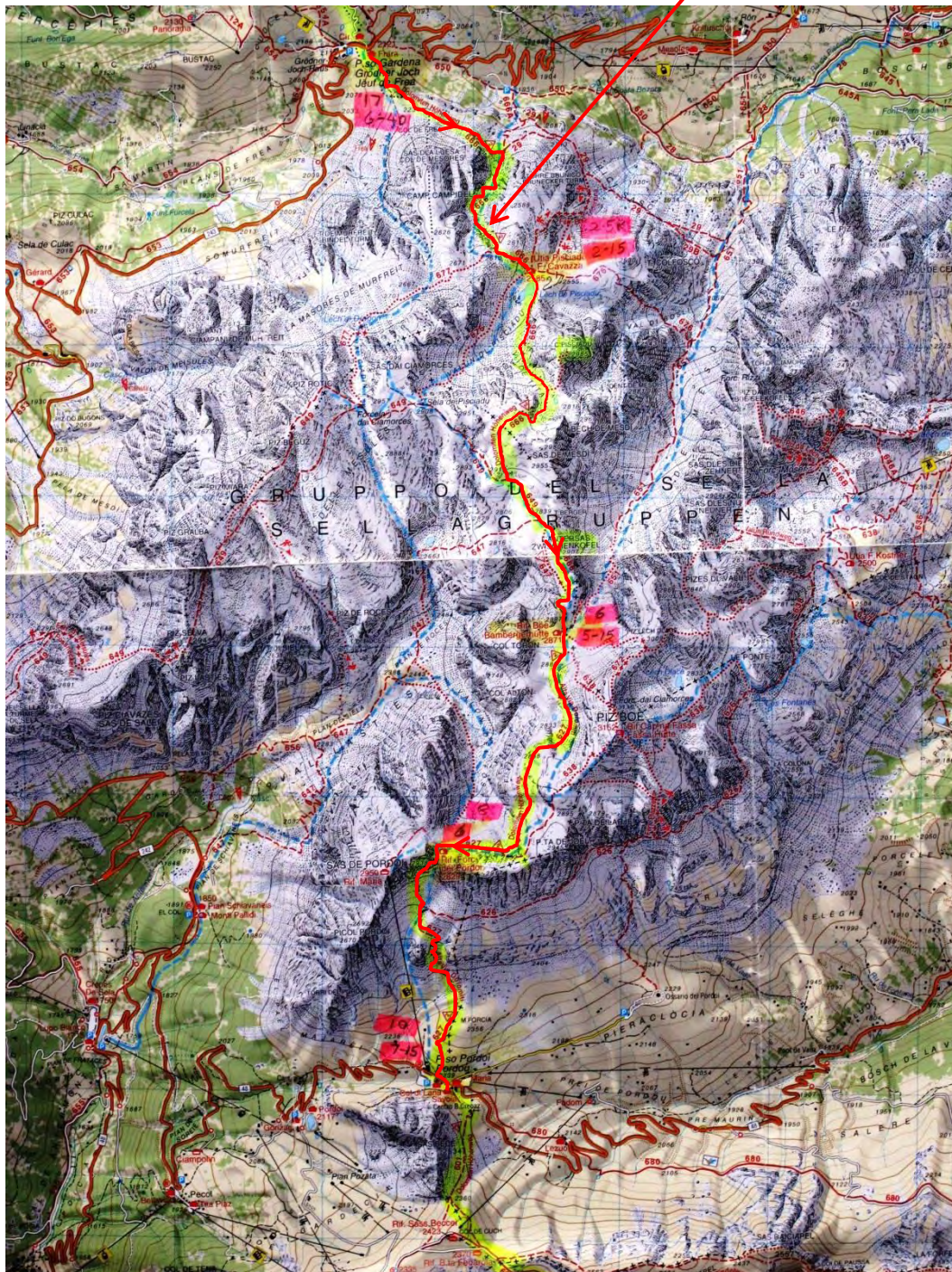


Fig 7. **Third days walk**

Day 5 Fri 11th Sept.

Today we had a late breakfast 8-30am not encourage to get on our way by the 10 cm layer of snow all over outside. Once started it was not too bad in very wet snow, rapidly thawing. We set off heading for the Marmolada which we would skirt round on its eastern side. Initially our route climbed up on the valley side; in good conditions looking south we would have had **great views across to the Marmolada. Today much to Jim's disgust it gave us only fleeting views of the mountain.**



Fig 8 **On route to Lago De Fedaia**

We dropped down into the valley containing Lago De Fedaia; no sign of snow here, later we walked by the lake on its southern side down to the village of Malaga Ciapella. We booked into the Hotel Tyrolia, it had been an easy day a climb of 193m and only 8k distance.

The **hotel was very comfortable and at €50 each for dinner bed and breakfast**, inexpensive. By now we realised that at this time of year it was as cost effective to stay at hotels where we could get our own room and good facilities; rather than mountain huts. Staying at the same hotel was a group of young fit looking lads I thought they were a football club. This was incorrect they were a group of budding professional referees from Brescia.

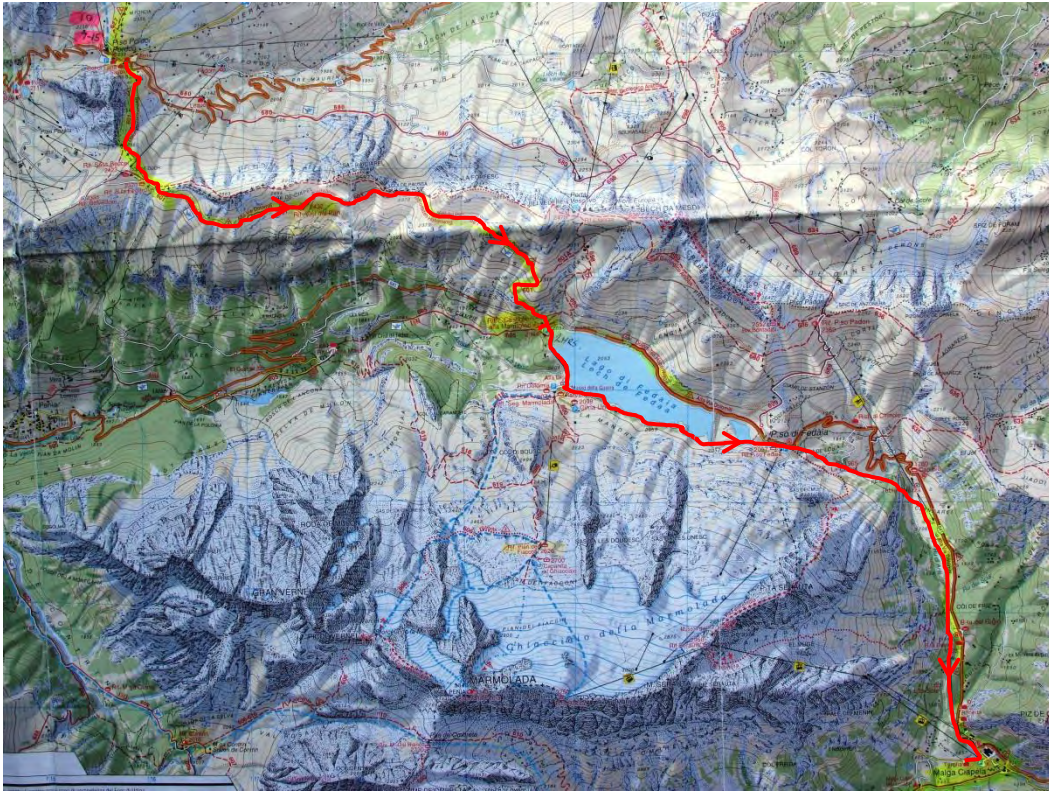


Fig 9. **Forth days walk**

Day 6 Sat 12th Sept.

Back to early starts after a good breakfast we were on the road at 8-0am our first objective Forca Rossa 2490m, a strategic pass during the First World War. A long climb of 1106m made easy by the track well engineered for use during the war.

Resting at the top we met for the first time on our walk many people it was apparent that a walk from the valley of our destinations was a popular day out. Dropping down we encountered a herd of friendly horses they tried to chew up our gear, Jim enjoyed it taking many photos. An hour from the top we arrived at a very busy Rifugio Fuchiade, where we ordered soup we got the impression that they were not impressed by our meagre order. On a broad motorable track we walked to our destination for the day Passo Di San Pelegreno. We found and booked into the Hotel Monzoni at a cost of **€109 for the both of us. At the very good evening meal we enquired about** the weather for the following day it was not very good, we had an inkling that it was deteriorating. We considered our options and decided to go off route to Passo Rolle and from there to make our way back to Lake Garda.



Fig 10. **The track to Forca Rossa**



Fig 11. **Fifth days walk**

Day 7 Sun 13th Sept.

Set off at 8-30am up a steep climb 313m to Forcella Di Pradazzo 2220m above Lago Di Cavia soon in mist. Not an inspiring area made worse by the desecration done to make it into a ski area. On to Passo Di Valles where we stopped in a café for a brew.



Fig 13. **Sixth days walk**

Back on the track up to Forcella Venegia beyond a little way the track forked the Alt Via 2 track N° 751 continuing south east. Our route, track N° 649 would take us south south east down to Val Venegia and on to Passo Rolle. First we climbed on a good track up to Passo Costazza, stopping at the top at the Rifugio Segantini. We staying out side for a bite as it was full.

On down to Passo Rolle for our last night in the mountains spent at the **Hotel Alpenrose, basic but not bad for €35 each including breakfast; it had** been a walk of 18k. After a shower, down in the bar we enquired about the buses to Trento. The first one was at 7-50am this would take us to Cavalese where we had to change for Trento.



Fig 14. **Sixth days walk**

We arranged dinner with our host for 7-0pm, it would be spaghetti Bolognese. We went down to the bar at 7-0pm but it was locked, searching for another entrance, tried knocking but could not raise anyone. So we gave up and walked about a mile to another hotel and had dinner.

Day 8 Mon 14th Sept.

Today we would travel by bus and train to Verona then onto Garda at Lake Garda where we planned to spend 2 days R&R.

Breakfast at 7-30am our host asked us where we were last night we explained that we could not get into the bar at 7-0 so went out for dinner. She said that she had overslept and went up to our room and knocked on the door at 7-30, no apology was given.

Out on the street we caught the bus booking tickets through to Trento, a local girl got on she was also going to Trento so we decided to take our que from her. The bus would take us to Cavalese where we would change for Trento, just as we entered Cavalese the girl got up and the bus stopped. Down a side street was the Trento bus so we followed and boarded the bus. We got off at the rail station where we booked tickets for Verona the train time was 12-30pm; we had an hour and a half wait. Jim decided to go into Trento to take photos I waited on the platform and phoned our Hotel in Verona. We had booked the last night of our trip but now needed to increase it to two nights, this I managed to do.

Jim arrived back early from his walk round it was now going up for 12-00 noon, a train arrived, someone asked was this going to Verona: it was so we jumped on it. It was only when we are on it that alarm bells ring, In Italy there are two types of trains fast and slow each with their own price. We had only paid €22 which I was sure was the slow train price. So it was, when the inspector caught up with us we had to pay €55 for a fast train ticket.

On arrival at Verona we caught a bus to Garda; there we went to the Tourist Information office. They booked us into the Hotel Giotto at a cost of €89 for B&B, it is located six minutes' walk from the lake. In the evening we walked to Bardolino along the lake side, on the way back we had a meal in a lake side Restaurant.



Fig 15. **Garda on Lake Garda**

Day 9 Tues 15th Sept.

Today we caught a boat to Sirmione a town at the southern end of the lake; this is located on a promontory in the lake, which we walked round. In the evening back at Garda we had a meal outside by the lake.



Fig 16. **Walking at Sirmione**

Day 10 Wed 16th Sept.

Jim was off early today on a coach to Milan, I took a fast boat north on the lake to Malcesine arriving at 12-30pm. I spent a few hours walking round exploring the castle. Back at Garda later I met Jim by the lake where again we had a meal.



Fig 16 **Harbour at Malcesine**

Day 11 Thurs 17th Sept.

Today we caught the bus back to Verona, the hotel Giotto had been a good stay the breakfast was particularly good. We got off the bus in the square and had a coffee in one of the many cafes then walked down to the Hotel Scalzi. A short tour of the city followed then a meal in a pavement café.

Day 12 Fri 18th Sept.

Last full day in Italy we did an extensive tour of the city, into many churches, **the courtyard with Juliet's balcony, four hours we spent** wandering around. I had had enough, I left Jim still photographing and went back to the hotel and packed up for the move out tomorrow.

In the evening we went back to the German restaurant close by for our final meal in Verona, we had our first meal here on arrival; good fare.



Fig 17. **Juliet's Balcony**

Day 13 Sat 19th Sept.

Today we fly back, early breakfast 7-30am then a walk to the train station where we caught the airport bus, these run **every 6mins and it cost €6** each. Our flight was on time leaving at 11-10am arriving Manchester 12-35pm. I caught the 13-29 train direct to Poulton, Jim went off to **Manchester to his son's house, later in the day he was driving down to London.** Geraldine met me at the station I was back in the house for 3-0.

6.0 Conclusion

Another good Dolomite trip it is a great area for walking, weather had been good despite closing in a little at the end. Doing it at the back end of the summer season gives you good flexibility. The huts are not full so you do not have to commit and pre book. Going as the route does over major passes allows you to stay in good hotels with en-suite facilities, which at this time of year are priced reasonably.

The route is well sign posted, more strenuous than the Alt Via 1, you stay higher; but presents no technical difficulties that require specialist kit.

I think it would be worth doing the trip again this time going to the end.

Dave Fisher