

# How to Visit Prato Piazza (Plätzwiese) Plateau in the Braies/Prags Dolomites

Blog > Europe > Italy > Dolomites



Prato Piazza (Plätzwiese in German) is a high plateau and alpine pasture above Valle di Braies/Pragser Tal Valley, a side valley of Val Pusteria/Pustertal in the **Italian Dolomites.** The plateau lies at an elevation of 2000 meters above sea level.

The plateau lies between Picco di Vallandro/Dürrenstein (2839 m) and Monte Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo/Hohe Gaisl (3146 m) in Fanes-Sennes-Braies Nature Park in South Tyrol.

Prato Piazza is a top attraction in the Braies/Prags Dolomites, because of its accessibility, proximity to **Lago di Braies**, easy hiking trails, and extraordinary views of Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo, **Cadini di Misurina**, Monte Cristallo, and Piz Popena.

Plätzwiese High Plateau is also a great destination for family with children.

You can easily spend a whole day up here. Watch the sunrise, or sunset atop **Monte Specie/Strudelkopf**, eat a South Tyrolean feast at one of the alpine pasture huts, and hike the **Gaisl High Trail**.

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fall for hiking (ideally before July 10th, or after September 10th), or winter for crosscountry skiing, snowshoeing and tobogganing.

- Prato Piazza Toll Road:
   Consult prags.bz for up-todate information.
- Seasonal Road Restrictions
   (July 10 September 10): In
   Braies Valley, there are road
   restrictions in place between
   July 10 and September 10.
   However, you can still drive up
   to the plateau before 9:30 am,
   or after 4 pm. During the day,
   the plateau is only accessible
   by transit, bicycle, or foot.
- Top Attraction: Monte
   Specie/Strudelkopf summit
   view
- Best Hike: Gaisl High Trail
- Where to Eat: Rifugio Prato
   Piazza, Malga Prato Piazza
   (Almhütte Plätzwiese), Rifugio
   Vallandro (Dürrensteinhütte),
   or Malga Stolla Alm
- Where to Stay on Prato
   Piazza: Hotel Hohe Gaisl



**Agritur Moserhof** (midrange), or **Farmhouse Hanslerhof** (midrange)

- Where to Stay in Val
   Pusteria: Hotel Christof (luxury)
- Recommended Trail Map:

Tabacco 031: Pragser

Dolomiten/Dolomiti di Braies

Prato Piazza Map





When to Visit Prato Piazza, Braies Valley





### Summer

In summer, Prato Piazza is an active alpine pasture, where cattle graze freely. The atmosphere is lively and all the huts are open.

In June and early July, the meadows are carpeted in wildflowers: gentian, kidney vetch, forget-me-not, and buttercup.

During peak season, visit early in the day (before 9:30 am) to avoid driving restrictions.



makes getting here impossible without one.

We loved visiting Prato Piazza in late October, because the Rifugi are still open, it's relatively peaceful, and the colors transform to ripe yellows and oranges.

Most mountain huts in the Dolomites close down in late September. So, it's a real treat to eat lunch in a hut in **October**, or even early November.

### Winter

In winter, Prato Piazza is a ski touring, winter hiking, snow-shoeing, and tobogganing destination. There's also a 6-km-long cross-country skiing circuit.

We recently visited Plätzwiese in early **December**, before the 443 bus was operating (late December to late March). The road was covered in snow. Equipped with **winter tires** (and snow chains in the car), we drove up to the Prato Piazza car park. Smarter drivers drove 90% of the road and parked before the traffic light, just before the road steepens.

From the car park, we walked out-and-back to Rifugio Vallandro/Dürrensteinhütte in hiking boots (no seasonal equipment needed) and ended our visit with lunch at Rifugio Prato Piazza.

It was a lovely visit full of wintery scenery, but also some anxiety. If the shuttle is operating, take it. And if the road isn't plowed and you're not



## Spring

Between mid-April and early/mid-June, Prato Piazza can be reached free of charge all day long. At this time, there is no public transit to Prato Piazza. You can drive up with your own car.

Prato Piazza Hiking Trails

Monte Specie / Strudelkopf





Monte Specie is one of the easiest summits to reach from Prato Piazza. This popular, panoramic mountain boasts impressive views of the Sexten Dolomites and the Cristallo Group.

From the Prato Piazza car park, follow the road to Rifugio Prato Piazza (5 minutes).

Between the Rifugio and **Hotel Hohe Gaisl**, turn left onto trail 40, passing the white chapel. At the trail 40/40a juncture, turn right onto trail 40a and cross the meadow to Malga Prato Piazza.

Continue following trail 40a, towards the impressive Piz Popena and Monte Cristallo peaks.

At the trail 40a/34 intersection, head left on trail 34 to the Strudelsattel and then up to the Monte Specie summit, crowned by a wooden cross.



To return to Prato Piazza, head back to the Strudelsattel and then turn left, following the "Steig" (hiking trail) to Rifugio Vallandro/Dürrensteinhütte.

From the Vallandro refuge, follow trail 37 (macadam road) back to Rifugio Prato Piazza.

### Strudelkopf Trail Stats

Trailhead | Prato Piazza Car Park

Distance | 8.8 km circuit

**Time Needed** | 3 hours

Elevation Gain/Loss | 389 meters

**Difficulty** | Easy

**Learn More: Monte Specie Trail Guide** 

Picco di Vallandro / Dürrenstein





Picco di Vallandro is another summit you can hike to from Prato Piazza. It takes 2 hours to ascend to the peak from the car park.

Honestly, I'm surprised that this is such a popular hike. The trail is a bit monotonous.

From Rifugio Prato Piazza, follow trail 40 (same trail as Monte Specie) past the white chapel. Trail 40 guides you all the way up to the summit.

Initially, this path steers you across grassy pastures. As you gain elevation, you'll hike across some easy, karst terrain. The grade is always moderate. As you ascend, views of Monte Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo/Hohe Gaisl will be your constant companion.

When you reach the ridge, continue left. The trail zigzags up to the peak in 20 minutes.



Atop Picco di Vallandro, peaks rise up in every direction, including **Tre Cime di Lavaredo**, Croda del Becco/Seekofel, Monte Sella di Sennes, **Sass de Putia/Peitlerkofel**, Tofana di Mezzo, **Pala di San Martino**.

#### Dürrenstein Peak Trail Stats

Trailhead | Prato Piazza Car Park

**Distance** | 9.2 km out-and-back

Time Needed | 4 hours

Elevation Gain/Loss | 872 meters

**Difficulty** | Moderate

Gaisl High Trail: Prato Piazza – Malga Rossalm – Ponticello



Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo/Hohe Gaisl (3146 m) is the highest mountain in the Braies/Prags Dolomites.

An extremely enjoyable trail runs along the northern base of the Hohe Gaisl massif.

This northern Gaisl high trail links Prato Piazza to Malga Rossalm in Upper Kaserbachtal valley.

From Rifugio Prato Piazza, follow trail 3 across meadows and pockets of forest to Malga Stolla Alm. The path ascends to the northeastern foot of Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo/Hohe Gaisl and then leads west, crossing a series of cirques.

From Malga Rossalm, follow the hut access road down to Ponticello/Brückele car park.



### Gaisl High Trail Stats

**Starting Point** | Prato Piazza Car Park

Ending Point | Ponticello/Brückele Car Park

**Distance** | 12 km point-to-point

Time Needed | 4:10 hours

Elevation Gain | 482 meters

**Elevation Loss** | 958 meters

**Difficulty** | Moderate

**Trail Guide: Gaisl High Trail** 

Prato Piazza Places to Eat



#### Malga Prato Piazza

There are several places to eat on the Prato Piazza plateau. Opening times vary, depending on weather conditions. All of these establishments are open seasonly.

Rifugio Prato Piazza / Berggasthof Plätzwiese



Elevation | 2000 m

**How to Get Here** | This hut is located on trail 37, a mere 5-minute walk from the car park.

Summer Opening Times | Mid-May until early November

Winter Opening Times | December - April

Rifugio Prato Piazza is only closed for 3 weeks in May and 3 weeks in November.

### Malga Prato Piazza / Almhütte Plätzwiese

Malga Prato Piazza is an alpine pasture hut surrounded by meadows, situated along trail 40a. They serve local South Tyrolean cuisine, wine, and beer.

Elevation | 2030 m

**How to Get Here** | At Rifugio Prato Piazza, ascend along trail 40 for 10 minutes. At the trail 40/40a intersection, turn right on trail 40a and walk 5 minutes to the hut.

**Summer Opening Times** | Early May until mid-October, 9 am – 6 pm

Rest Days | This hut is closed on Tuesdays and possibly on rainy days.



Rifugio Vallandro is a mountain refuge on the Alta Via 3 long-distance trail, overlooking the Cristallo Group. **Rifugio Vallandro** stands next to Forte Prato Piazza, an Austro-Hungarian fortress ruin dating back to the First World War.

Elevation | 2040 m

**How to Get Here** | From the Prato Piazza parking lot, follow the flat gravel road (trail 37) all the way to the hut. It's a 30-40 minute walk.

**Summer Opening Times** | mid-May to early November

Winter Opening Times | mid-December to mid-April

**Rest Days** | The hut is closed on Fridays, except during peak season (July and August).

Malga Stolla / Stolla Alm



**Malga Stolla** enjoys an almost secret location at the foot of Croda Rossa d'Ampezzo/Hohe Gaisl.

Elevation | 1950 m

**How to Get Here** | It's a 25 minute walk from the Prato Piazza car park to Stolla Alm. When you get to Rifugio Prato Piazza, turn right and follow trail 3 across the wide-open meadow. This path leads through pockets of larch and swiss pine to the Malga.

**Summer Opening Times** | mid June until mid September. They serve warm food from 11 am until 3 pm.

Payment | Cash Only



#### Car

Drive to Valle di Braies/Pragser Tal in South Tyrol. Follow the main road through Braies valley.

When the road divides at **Segheria**, bear left. Drive up Val di Braies Vecchia/Altpragstal (Old Braies Valley) to Ponticello/Brückele.

At Ponticello/Brückele, there's a pay-and-display car park and a toll gate.

Depending on the time of year and time of day, you can either drive the 6-km toll road up to Prato Piazza, or you must part at the pay-and-display car park at Ponticello/Brückele.



If you're visiting during **peak season** (July 10 – September 10), you can purchase a "private arrival" combi ticket on the prags.bz website to secure a transit permit and parking space.

Outside of peak season, it's possible to drive the toll road to Prato Piazza in the morning, or in the late afternoon. **These times and regulations change every year**, and it's difficult for us to keep up with all the changes.

During our last visit in late September, we paid a 10 EUR toll (cash only) to drive the 6-km toll road to Prato Piazza. During shoulder season, it's only possible to drive this toll road **before 10 am or after 3 pm**.

There is a year-round ban on the passage of private buses and campers/motorhomes.

#### Ponticello Car Park

If you arrive at the toll gate entrance between 10 am and 3 pm, park at the **pay-and-display car park at Ponticello**, directly next to the toll gate. From here, you can take **Bus 443** to Prato Piazza.

#### Parking Fee |

• Cars: 4 EUR for less than 2 hours, 6 EUR for more than 2 hours

Vans: 12 EURBuses: 20 EUR



### **Braies Valley Traffic Regulations**

There are road restrictions in place between July 10 and September 10 in Braies Valley/Pragser Tal.

However, you can still drive up to the plateau before 9:30 am or after 4 pm.

During the day, the plateau is only accessible by transit, bicycle, or foot.

In high summer, you can **reserve a parking space** at Ponticello/Brückele and then take bus 443 up to the plateau.

Bus



View of Monte Piana and Cadini di Misurina from Monte Specie/Strudelkopf

**Bus route 443** connects Monguelfo/Welsberg and Dobbiaco/Toblach to Plätzwiese plateau. This bus usually operates from mid-June until mid-October.

Use the Südtirolmobil journey planner to find the best connections.

Where to Stay near Prato Piazza



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### Valle di Braies / Pragser Tal Valley

Valle di Braies valley is the best base for exploring everything that the northern Prags/Braies Dolomites has to offer. The top attractions are **Prato Piazza** and **Lago di Braies**.

But with more time, you can venture off-the-beaten-path to the Ütia Fojadora mountain pasture, Grünwaldtal valley and Hochalpensee lake, **Hochalpenkopf peak**, Croda del Becco/Seekofel summit, Herrstein peak, Grosser Rosskopf peak, and the **Gaisl high trail** (Prato Piazza to Malga Rossalm).

**Budget** | **Garni Bergblick** is a top-rated guesthouse in Valle di Braies, located a mere 5.6 km (10 min drive) from Lago di Braies, 6.2 km (9 min



Dolomites, Breakfast included.

**Budget-Midrange** | **Berggasthaus Agritur Moserhof** is a traditional and cozy farm stay, perched high above Braies/Prags Valley. Breakfast and dinner are included in the rate. From Moserhof, it's a 5-minute drive down to the valley and a 11-minute drive to Lago di Braies.

**Midrange** | **Farmhouse Hanslerhof** is a mountain guesthouse and farm overlooking Braies/Prags Valley and surrounded by meadows. Guests love the charming stone pine rooms, homemade breakfasts (included the room rate), and quiet location. From Hanslerhof, it's an 8 minute drive to Lago di Braies.

Midrange | Hotel Erika is a 3-star hotel situated at the entrance of Valle di Braies. Guests have access to a lovely 400m² wellness area containing a Finnish Sauna (90 °C), steam bath (42-45° C), bio sauna (60 °C), infrared lounge, jacuzzi, and relaxation rooms. Rooms are clean and comfortably furnished in a Tyrolean-alpine style. A rich and varied breakfast buffet and a 5-course dinner are included in the room rate (half board). From Hotel Erika, it's a 10-minute drive to Lago di Braies and a 20-minute drive to Prato Piazza.

**Midrange** | **Hotel Turmchalet** (3 nights minimum) is a family-run 3-star-superior hotel in Valle di Briaes, praised for their superior service and friendliness. The hotel was recently renovated, resulting in tastefully-designed, alpine-modern bedrooms and a standout facade. Guests describe the cuisine as delicious, sensational and outstanding. Breakfast and dinner are included in the room rate (half board). And, there's also a wellness area.



### Monguelfo / Welsberg

Monguelfo is a village in Val Pusteria, which is only a 3-minute drive to the entrance of Braies Valley.

**Budget-Midrange** | **Gailerhof B&B** is a well-priced B&B in Monguelfo, which enjoys a quiet elevated perch above Val Pusteria. The rooms are comfortable and modern and the breakfast is delicious.

**Luxury** | **Hotel Christof** is a new and stylish hotel in the village of Monguelfo/Welsberg in Val Pusteria. Stay here for the striking fresh-faced architecture, modern 600 m² wellness area, and excellent cuisine (you can book breakfast-only or half board). This modern hotel is a splash of cheerful color and laid-back fun on the South Tyrolean hospitality scene. From the hotel, it's a 13-minute drive to Lago di Braies.

Look for accommodation in Monguelfo.

San Candido / Innichen



#### Naturhotel Leitlhof

San Candido is a town in Val Pusteria/Pustertal valley within the **Alta Pusteria region**. San Candido is an excellent place to stay when you want to split your time between the **Sexten Dolomites** and the Prags Dolomites.

You can explore the northern Sexten Dolomites from **Val Fiscalina/Fischleintal** and Val Campo di Dentro/Innerfeldtal (e.g. **Torre dei Scarperi hike**).

To access the southern Sexten Dolomites, you can drive through Valle di Landro/Höhlensteintal to Lake Misurina, Lake Antorno, and onwards to Tre Cime di Lavaredo via the **Rifugio Auronzo toll road**.

We recommend hiking the **Sentiero Bonacossa North Trail** (challenging day hike), the **Three Peaks Circuit Trail** (easy-moderate day hike), and the **Cadini di Misurina viewpoint** (short easy hike).



**Apartments** | **Residence Kugler** offers new, fully-equipped apartments in San Candido.

**Luxury** | **Naturhotel Leitlhof** is a 4-star-superior, climate-neutral wellness hotel in San Candido. Situated at a slight elevation and bordered by forest, idyllic Naturhotel Leitlhof overlooks the village and the gorgeous Sexten mountains including Haunold/Rocca dei Baranci and Dreischusterspitze/Cima di Tre Scarperi. Sunsets and sunrises are glorious here. The 2000 m² wellness facilities and outdoor pool are stellar. And, the cuisine is second to none. Read our **Naturhotel Leitlhof hotel review**.

**Luxury** | **Boutique & Gourmet Hotel Orso Grigio** is a 4-star hotel in San Candido's lively pedestrian center. This central hotel offers an excellent breakfast, gourmet dinners (on-site restaurant, half board available), and free reserved parking behind the property.

Adults-Only Luxury | Post Hotel – Tradition & Lifestyle Adults Only is located in the center of San Candido, close to the pedestrian zone. This chic boutique hotel offers a spa, rooftop terrace, and on-site restaurant and bar. Half board is available.

Luxury Apartments | ATTO Suites & Cuisine is a new luxury aparthotel in San Candido, furnished with the highest quality local materials. These gorgeous, minimalist apartments teeter stylistically between Alpine and Nordic. An excellent breakfast is included (with gluten-free options). Other included services: parking, shuttle service to the Leitlhof spa, and bicycle storage room.

Look for an accommodation in San Candido.



### **Nature Park**

While you	ı're visiting F	Prato Piazza, pl	ease adhere	to the fo	llowing <b>rul</b>	es:
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No motor vehicles are allowed within the park.

Wild camping is prohibited in the park.

Always stay on marked trails and paths. This helps prevent damage to the meadows and alpine pastures.

Do not pick flowers.

Respect the habitat of animals. Do not make any unnecessary noise.

Do not light fires.

Do not litter. Please take your garbage with you and dispose of it responsibly.

Do not touch, or approach grazing animals.

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# **Dolomites Trip Planning Essentials**

Use our **Dolomites Travel Guide** to plan an unforgettable trip to Northern Italy.

When to Hike in the Dolomites



- Best Time to Visit the Dolomites
- Dolomites in September
- Dolomites in October
- Dolomites in May

#### How to Get to the Dolomites

Read **How to Get to the Dolomites** to find out how to travel to the Dolomites from the closest airports, train stations, and bus terminals.

If you're traveling without a car, also check out **How to Visit the Dolomites Without a Car**.

#### Car Rental

The easiest way to travel between hiking destinations in the Italian Dolomites is with your own car. Check out our itineraries for trip inspiration:

- 5 Day Dolomites Road Trip
- 7 Day Dolomites Road Trip
- 10-14 Day Dolomites Road Trip



providers, so that you can choose the best option for your trip.

Tip: If you can only drive automatic transmission cars, as opposed to manual transmission cars (stick shift), book your car rental as early as possible.

Check car rental rates here.

### **Best Places to Stay**

Figuring out where to stay in the Dolomites is probably the biggest hurdle to planning a trip to the Dolomites. We've created several guides to help you decide where to stay:

- Where to Stay in the Dolomites in Summer: best villages and towns in South Tyrol, Trentino and Belluno
- Best Hotels in the Dolomites: best boutique and luxury hotels in the Dolomites
- Dolomites Accommodation Guide: farm stays, mountain huts, wellness hotels, aparthotels
- Val Gardena Hotels: best accommodations in Ortisei, Santa Cristina, and Selva
- Alta Badia Hotels

We suggest choosing 2-4 bases for your Dolomites trip and spending 2-4 nights in each base.

• Base 1: Val Gardena



- Base 5: Alta Pusteria
- Base 6: San Martino di Castrozza

#### What to See & Do

During your trip to the Dolomites, you can go via ferrata climbing, culinary hiking, **hut to hut hiking**, cycling, paragliding, and so much more. We've highlighted our favorite experiences in **Best Things to Do in the Dolomites**.

Wherever you decide to stay, you'll be surrounded by glorious mountain scenery and incredible natural landmarks.

In **Best Places to Visit in the Dolomites**, we've outlined the most iconic attractions as well as lesser-known destinations across the Dolomites, including **Alpe di Siusi**, **Lago di Sorapis**, **Lago Federa**, **Seceda**, and **Baita Segantini**.

### **Dolomites Packing List**

#### Hiking Gear

Day Pack: Osprey Tempest 30 Women's Backpack / Osprey
 Talon 33 Men's Backpack



- CAT 4 Sunglasses: Julbo Shield Mountain Sunglasses
- Hiking Poles: Black Diamond Trail Trekking Poles
- Reusable Water Bottle: Ion Leakproof 32 oz Water Bottle

#### **Outdoor Photography Gear**

- Camera Body: Sony Alpha a6400
- Mid-range Zoom Lens: Tamron 17-70mm 2.8 Di III-A VC RXD
- Wide angle Zoom Lens: Sony E 10-18mm F4 OSS Wideangle Zoom Lens
- Backpack Camera Clip: Peak Design Camera Clip

### **Dolomites Hiking Guides**

Hiking in the Dolomites is our passion. Year after year, we love discovering new trails and expanding our knowledge of the area. For day hiking, check out **Best Day Hikes in the Dolomites**. For trekking, take a look at our guide to **Hut to Hut Hiking in the Dolomites** and **Alta Via 1**.

For region-specific hiking trails, check out:

- Best Hikes in Val Gardena
- Best Hikes in Cortina d'Ampezzo
- Best Hikes in Alta Badia
- Sexten Dolomites Hiking Guide
- Puez-Odle Nature Park





#### Alpine Hiking, Mountain Escapes



### Sabrina Brett

Hello! I'm a spirited traveler on a quest to hike in the most picturesque alpine and coastal destinations across Europe. In 2016, I left my home and job in San Francisco, California, to move to Germany, and later Austria. The following year, I created this blog to help like-minded travelers experience new and exciting ways to travel authentically. I travel to hike, and I hope to inspire your next adventure.

This post may contain affiliate links.



# (Plätzwiese) Plateau in the Braies/Prags Dolomites"

#### **Michiel**

November 28, 2023 at 3:37 pm

At first what a great website full of infirmation.

I already planned my 9 days hut to hut hike in the Dolomites.

Reading the website getting me doupting. But I stick mostly to my plans. Some tips I could put in my plan. By reading you website I know that I need to come back. I read so much that I want to explore. Wonderfull!!

The question I have is:

I scribed me in for the newsletter and comfirm my e-mail but where can I find the e-book?

Greatz, Michiel

<u>Reply</u>

#### moonhoneytravel

November 29, 2023 at 2:00 pm



system that the email with the downloadable ebook link was sent out yesterday. Can you check your spam folder and promotions folder? Make sure to whitelist our email, so you don't miss any updates.

Kindly,

Sabrina

Reply

#### **Brendan**

December 22, 2024 at 12:54 pm

Hi,

Thank you so much for this. I was wondering would the Strudelkopf trail be accessible to hike during early April? Struggling to find good 3-5 hour hikes during that time for our upcoming trip (besides Lago di Braies walk). Would you have any other suggestions?

Thank you again!

<u>Reply</u>

#### Sabrina Brett

<u>January 2, 2025 at 1:12 pm</u>



possible to walk from Rifugio Prato Piazza to Rifugio Vallandro without special equipment. To get to Strudelkopf, you may need snow shoes. It's best to ask the local tourist office shortly before you arrive, when conditions are known. I would walk <u>Val Fiscalina</u> out-and-back. In December, we followed the circuit trail around Toblacher See/Lago di Dobbiaco and enjoyed the wintery landscape.

Kindly,

Sabrina

<u>Reply</u>

#### Leave a Comment

Name *		
Email *		



Post Comment



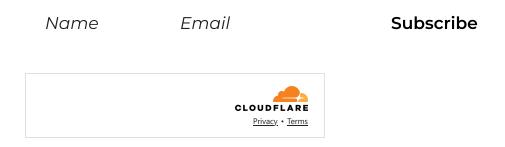






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