

## **PRESS INFORMATION: DORF TIROL**

### **HOLIDAYS - WHERE THE NAME OF THE COUNTRY "TIROL" HAS ITS ORIGINS**

In South Tyrol, in the Burggrafenamt area, Etschtal valley: Dorf Tirol, health resort situated at 596 m above sea level, near Meran.

Dorf Tirol is said to be the sunny terrace of the spa town Meran. In fact, in this place the sun shines a little bit brighter and a little bit longer than anywhere else in the region; anyhow the Burggrafenamt area features lots of climatic advantages.

The health resort has about 2,350 inhabitants and approx. 5,000 guest beds. The wide and varied offer for tourists ranges from moderate-priced family-run guest houses to luxurious 5-star-hotels. Every year, 700,000 overnight stays are recorded. The village is so wide that Dorf Tirol never seems to be crowded. It lies on an extensive sunny plateau with a total surface of 2,600 ha, with vineyards and fruit orchards. A site of an extraordinary beauty in the middle of a big nature park.

### **THE ROOTS OF TIROL – A WANDER THROUGH HISTORY**

Around the year 1140 the counts of the Vinschgau valley were mentioned for the first time as "counts of Tirol". A "very influential and tenacious family" that managed to extend its domains over the whole region after a long series of fights.

Tirol Castle, the dynastic fortress of the counts of Tirol was built between 1140 and 1160. No other seat of nobility can form such a solid rock memorial to the history of the region as does Tirol Castle which gave the province its name.

Dorf Tirol was first mentioned in a document in 1149. 1248 is considered to be the year of birth of the county Tirol. The former term "land in the mountains" is substituted by the new "dominium comitis Tyrolis".

In 1347, Tirol Castle is attacked by King Charles of Bohemia. Countess Margarethe Maultasch puts up strong resistance and King Charles is given no choice other than to withdraw.

The resignation of Margarethe Maultasch in 1363 marks the end of the golden age of Tirol Castle. The counts of Tirol move into other castles and they transfer their official residence from Meran to Innsbruck.

The end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century sees the decline of Tirol Castle. Only a castle dweller, a castle chaplain and a forest warden are still living there as "castle barons".

In the 17<sup>th</sup> century, the north-eastern corner with the princes' rooms is completely dismantled due to the friability of the moraine hill. Today, the fairy tale-like castle is still standing on that hill.

In 1807, when South Tyrol was detached from Bavaria and annexed to Napoleon's kingdom of Italy, Tirol Castle is auctioned for 2,000 florints – probably with the intention to hurt the feelings of the Tyroleans. In 1816, the town Meran acquires the castle and gives it later to the Emperor Franz.

After the First World War, the castle passes into the possession of the Italian state. Only in 1974 Tirol Castle comes back into the hands of the province South Tyrol. In 1990, the administrative board of the South Tyrolean Museum of Archaeology takes over the management of Tirol Castle. Today, the historical museum takes the visitor back to the roots of Tirol.

## PLACES OF INTEREST

### Tirol Castle

Open from 10am to 5pm. Closed on Mondays. Tel. 0473/220221

Still today, the historical place invites the visitors to go back in time and to experience the rich history of days gone by. The Archaeological Museum provides an overall view on the first settlements in the alpine region starting from the 7<sup>th</sup> century BC. Visitors may also admire a fully intact melting furnace dating back to the Bronze Age.

The main wall (built around 1100) is one of the oldest and best preserved castle walls in the alpine region including parts of the battlements.

An art historically very prominent example are the two marble portals of the 12<sup>th</sup> century. Rich in symbolic sculptures, they belong to the most original Romanesque creations in Tirol.

The chapel with frescos from the 13<sup>th</sup> century features the oldest Tyrolean stained glass windows as well as an imposing crucifixion group dating back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century.

### Tyrol Castle Bird Care Centre

Open: beginning of April to beginning of November daily except Mondays from 10.30 am to 5 pm.

Flight demonstrations: at 11.15 am and 3.15 pm

Tel. +39 0473 221500

Since 1998 injured birds of prey have been appropriately cared for on the castle hill of Tyrol Castle in special aviaries until they are healthy again and ready to be released back into the wild. The centre also gives a long-term home to birds that are incapable of flying again. Healthy birds are able to fly over the castle hill every day thanks to the centre's favourable hillside location. Visitors to the bird care centre can watch the birds of prey swooping and gliding during twice-daily flight demonstrations.

Experts, Willy Campej and Florian Gamper, are also on hand to tell visitors about the birds' lives and their part in nature's cycle, as well as about important protection measures.

New at the centre: a plant and bird-life nature trail.

### Brunnenburg

Open from 10.00 am to 5.00 pm. Closed on Fridays and Saturdays.

Tel. 0473/923533

The Brunnenburg Castle is said to be named after a nearby spring and lies on a glacial hill between the village centre and Tirol Castle. The fortresses date from between 1241 and 1253. At the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Brunnenburg was privately purchased and restored. Today it is a cultural centre and home of the South Tyrolean Agricultural museum.

### Zenoburg

Originally, Zenoburg Castle was a place of religious importance (palace chapel in the Middle Ages). Later on, Zenoburg became the favourite residence of the counts of Tirol. Today, the castle is in private possession of the Leopold von Braitenberg family. Zenoburg Castle, named after the patron saint of the water, may be admired only from the outside.

### Thurnstein Castle

Thurnstein Castle, a high tower combined with a residential building dating back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, is situated at the slopes of the Mut peak, in splendid location west of Tirol Castle. Today, Thurnstein Castle invites to try

culinary specialities in delightful surroundings as well as the famous Napoleon wine. The wine was given this name when people heard about the capture of Napoleon III. (at Sedan)

### **Auer Castle**

A picturesque, medieval building with circular wall with ivy growing on it. Auer Castle is lived in by the current owner family; the view from outside is definitely worth a visit.

### **St. Johannes (St. John the Baptist) Parish Church**

The Parish Church of Dorf Tirol was first mentioned in a document in 1164, although it already existed years before (probably as Baptist church for the region). The Parish Church is considered to be the oldest Missionary- and St. John Baptist Church of the surroundings. In its later years, the Romanesque church (the Romanesque tower is still preserved today) was extended by the addition of a Late Gothic choir.

One of the most interesting furnishings in the Parish Church is the baptismal font made of white Laas marble which dates from the beginning of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Also the church organ with a large quantity of antique wooden and metal pipes represents a remarkable masterpiece from an artistic and historical point of view. The New Gothic high altar, the bishop's figures, the St. John's statue above the baptismal font, oil paintings and the crucifixion group are other beautiful works of arts.

The renovation works of the Parish Church in 1969/70 brought to light the Secco-paintings from the year 1480.

### **St. Peter Parish Church - Gratsch**

The art historical building stands on an even older site dating back to the preroman period and is one of the rare examples of a cross-domed church with central nave and side naves. The small parish church is rich of frescos dating back to the roman period and of paintings from the gothic period.

### **St. Ruprecht's Church**

The church, first mentioned in 1332 and rich of frescos, was thoroughly renovated around 1900.

## **LEISURE TIME ACTIVITIES - SPORTS, NATURE AND CULTURE**

Dorf Tirol is characterized by an original rural context and an amazingly beautiful landscape - from the valley to the sunny slopes of the Küchelberg hill at 600 m of altitude and further on to the Spronser lakes situated at 2,500 m. The nearby Nature Park Texelgruppe – the biggest of all South Tyrolean Nature parks – exhibits one of the most beautiful landscapes of the region.

Dorf Tirol is the perfect location for excursions, hiking and climbing tours; in the middle of fruit orchards and vineyards, green alpine meadows and the eternal ice of the glaciers. With scented flowers in front of snow-covered mountains in spring and a myriad of warm and brilliant colours in autumn.

70 km of well-marked hiking trails are leading from Dorf Tirol into the colourful variety of the surrounding nature. Along the popular Tappeinerweg, the hiker will discover subtropical plants and trees. The Hans-Falkner-Weg is characterized by olive trees, laurel trees, pines and cypresses. Best hiking conditions are also provided by the climate. In Dorf Tirol, the warm season lasts from March to November (and also 15° C in January are not unusual here).

Apart from hiking trails, promenades, keep-fit-trail and different themed trails, Dorf Tirol has much to offer the sport enthusiasts:

Three public tennis courts (sand) and private courts (5 sand courts, 3 artificial grass courts, 1 court with granulate surface).

A public swimming pool and numerous private swimming pools.

Beach volleyball centre  
Mini golf, shooting range and skittle alley  
Paragliding - tourist flights

Various events are held during the whole year.  
concerts of the local music band, Sunday concerts, guided art historical excursions as well as guided hiking tours, classic music concerts, slides presentations and dancing evenings.  
Apple seminars and excursions through the vineyards with product sampling provide an interesting insight into local culture and tradition.

In case of bad weather conditions, which rarely occurs, video and slides presentations as well as a reading room are waiting for our guests.

## **ATTRACTIONS IN THE SURROUNDING AREA**

### **The Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle**

Meran, St. Valentin Strasse 51 a, Tel. +39 0473 235730  
Open 1 April – 15 November: 9 am - 6 pm, 15 May – 15 September: 9 am - 9 pm

The flourishing gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle stretch out across the sunny slopes overlooking Meran, where Empress Sissi of Austria once strolled. The Gardens promise “the world in a garden” - ancient cultivated plants, hillocks of cacti and succulent plants, South Tyrolean landscapes, deciduous and coniferous trees, and tea and rice terrace landscapes, which all shape the overall view of the complex.

### **Touriseum**

Museum for Tourism  
Meran, St. Valentin Strasse 51 a, Tel. +39 0473 270172  
Open 1 April – 15 November: 9 am - 6 pm, 15 May – 15 September: 9 am - 9 pm

The Touriseum is located at the heart of the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff, in close proximity to the city of Meran and in the castle of the same name, in which Empress Sissi of Austria twice spent several months during her winter cure.

The Touriseum is the first museum in the Alpine area to be dedicated on a large scale to the past and present of tourism. 7,000 exhibits across two floors bear witness to 200 years of tourism in South Tyrol, and look at the subject from two distinct points of view: that of the guest and that of the local population.

### **Meran Thermal Baths**

Meran, Tel. +39 0473 252000  
Open: daily from 9 am to 10 pm

Meran's thermal baths are situated at the heart of the old spa town along the river Passer. Visitors have access to 13 indoor pools and 12 outdoor pools (summer only), plus a 1,250 m<sup>2</sup> sauna facility. The incomparable park with its famous Meran flora covers 5.1 hectares and includes a unique Kneipp trail. The large sports pool that flows into the water lily pond is also accessible in summer. In winter, sauna users can refresh themselves in the snow room or in the park under the palms.

## **Racecourse**

Meran, Tel. +39 0473 446222

The racecourse, which can be found in Untermais, is among the largest and most beautiful equestrian sports complexes in Europe. It has a 5 km-long track with 24 hurdles and first staged a race in 1935. Annual highlights of the racing season include the traditional Haflinger Gallop Race on Easter Monday, and the Meran Grand Prix, a valuable, internationally renowned steeplechase over 5 km, which is associated with the National Lottery and always takes place on the last Sunday in September.

## **EXCURSIONS AND TOURS**

Dorf Tirol is considered to be a perfect starting point for excursions in the near and more distant surroundings. The spa town Meran is only a stone's throw away. And what about a sightseeing tour of the Dolomites, an excursion to the Seiser Alp, to the Stilfser Joch, to the Ritten plateau, the Schnalstal valley, the Ultental valley, Hafling – Falzeben – Schenna, to the Kalterer lake, the Garda lake or to Trento, Venice, Verona, Florence and St. Moritz?

And there where the name Tirol has its origins, the originality has been preserved until today. Tradition, history and heritage, ancient rural culture and a “new old cultural life“ in the framework of various events. Dorf Tirol has its roots both in history and modern life and endeavours to ensure a harmonious combination of tranquillity and vividness.

A rare and beautiful spot on earth – on historical ground – heart and namesake of the country – Dorf Tirol.

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