**AUTUMN IN TRENTINO: 10,000 DEER TAKE CENTRE STAGE**

**In Europe, few wildlife spectacles can match the autumn rut of red deer. Stags bellow, antlers clash, and the forests buzz with the excitement of the mating season. In Trentino, guided tours in all three of our Nature Parks reveal this magnificent ritual – played out against a backdrop of vivid colour and soaring mountain peaks.**

Trentino’s UNESCO-protected landscapes are famous. What fewer people know, however, is that it’s also a region of exceptional biodiversity. 30,000 wild goats, 27,000 chamois and 10,000 deer live here, along with brown bears, lynx, capercaillie and golden eagles. In late September and early October **the red deer take centre stage, during the autumn rut**: and put on a display of power and aggression made all the more memorable by its mountain setting.

Dusk is the best moment to witness it, as the rays of the setting sun light up the yellowing larches. It’s at this moment that our guided walks begin. In the company of Park Rangers, guests hike up into the forests, their footsteps muffled by carpets of fallen needles, until the silence is shattered by **the bellowing stags**. The roars are a show of strength, and when another male responds, the ritual gathers pace.

First, the stags walk up and down in parallel, roaring and grunting, as they work out who is the stronger. If it’s not obvious, then **the fighting begins** – head to head, antlers locked with antlers – with each stag trying to get above his opponent, and use the slope to his advantage. The winner takes all. A dominant stag will marshal a group of hinds into a harem, and mate with each one. (Although it’s not unknown for a smaller stag to sneak into the harem while the alpha males clash).

The guided walks take place between September 23 and October 10, in all three of Trentino’s nature parks – the **Stelvio National Park,** the **Adamello Brenta Park** and the **Paneveggio - Pale di San Martino Nature Park.** There are nine walks in total(three in each park and numbers are restricted, so as not to disturb the animals. In each case, guests assemble at the park’s visitor centre at 6.30pm for snacks made of local products, and a short presentation. This is followed by a guided tour, led by one of the Park’s wildlife experts, ending between 10.30 and 11.00pm.

More information about the red deer rut, and autumn holidays in Trentino, is available at the following link: <https://www.visittrentino.info/en/articles/green-holidays/deer-bellow>

**DON’T FORGET YOUR CAMERA**

Of course, there’s more than one way to enjoy this most ravishing of seasons. The cooler temperatures and crystal-clear air are tailor-made for invigorating walks, soaking up the last of the sun, and marveling at Mother Nature’s palette of colours. Sometimes, you can see the whole of autumn in a single view, from almost-winter on the mountain peaks, to late summer on the valley floors. Needless to say, you’ll need a camera. A selfie-stick will come in handy, too. After all, these are scenes begging to be shared.

Nowhere is the scenery more enthralling than in **the three Nature Parks of Trentino**, where both wildlife and landscape are protected, and the rhythms of the season are undisturbed. One of the most magnificent (and most-photographed) views is in the **Val Venegia**, in the heart of the **Paneveggio - Pale di San Martino Nature Park**. Here, a forest of yellowing larches spreads beneath the Pale di San Martino massif. Beneath a clear sky, with early snow dusting the crags, it’s a breathtaking scene.

Meanwhile, in the valleys of the **Stelvio National Park** special itineraries reveal the season’s highlights. Among them is the **Staircase of Monumental Larches**, a one-mile circuit past the patriarchs of the Val di Rabbi: a stand of towering and contorted trees that are hundreds of years old. Another footpath, this time from Marilleva, will take you to the lakes of Mezzana, where the water serves up an extra helping of reflected colour.

The Stelvio also organizes guided walks. On October 14-15, for example, you can join a **weekend with animals and autumn colors** - two days of total immersion in the park, observing the animals in their pristine habitats, and spending a night in a mountain dairy.

The **Adamello Brenta Park** is another spectacular place to take your camera for a walk. Ride the lift from Madonna di Campiglio to Pradalago (which operates until November 5), and you can reach **Lake Malghette** – another serene stretch of water, surrounded by trees and set beneath thrilling Dolomite scenery. And when the yellow of the larches is at its most intense, it’s time to walk from Sant’Antonio di Mavignola to the **Malga Brenta Bassa,** a mountain dairy set in the spectacular Val Brenta; or climb up to the **San Giuliano** lakes. Each of these walks takes only a few hours, and doesn’t involve much climbing. In other words, they put the best of autumn within almost everyone’s reach.

For more on autumn in Trentino, visit: <https://www.visittrentino.info/en/experience/autumn-special>

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