**A TRAIN RIDE THROUGH TRENTINO’S HISTORY**

**Trentino’s dramatic history has produced a wealth of mighty castles and forts – and one of the best ways to sample them is by train. This summer, after sell-out seasons in 2015 and 2016, *Il Trenino dei Castelli* will run again on the Trento-Malé line, offering guided tours of four of our most dramatic and interesting castles: San Michele and Caldes in the Val di Sole, and Valer and Thun in the Val di Non. Expect stunning scenery, fascinating history and culture, and delicious food and wine. This year’s programme also features three special trains for children.**

For centuries, Trentino has been on the front line – between Italy and the Alps, between northern and southern Europe, and between competing kingdoms and empires.

As a result, the province is thickly-strewn with castles and forts. Some retain their original gothic forms. Many were later revamped in graceful Renaissance style by Trento’s powerful prince-bishops. Others reflect the tensions that led to the Great War. So whatever style of fortification you fancy, you’ll find a striking example of it here. Fairy-tale lakeside castles, crenellated strongholds, thick concrete bunkers, sunk deep into the ground: we’ve got them all. Many are now open to visitors.

There are all sorts of ways to explore this rich heritage: but the most relaxing is our summer railway service – *Il Trenino dei Castelli*. This year, it runs every Saturday from April 15 to June 10, and from July 29 to September 16, linking Trento with the Val di Sole and the Val di Non. Accompanied by expert tour guides, passengers visit four of our most impressive castles, as well as feasting on local food and wine.

Meanwhile, on three Sundays – June 4, July 30, August 20 – we’re laying on a special children’s service. Young castle-lovers will travel at discounted rates, and enjoy a range of events, from workshops and guided tours to a treasure hunt for the whole family.

**Il Trenino dei Castelli: the programme**

The tour leaves Trento by train at 8.45 with a hearty breakfast courtesy of local apple producer Melinda and local Latte Trento milk brand. It winds up into the mountains to the town of Mezzana, where the party transfers to coaches at 10.35. Then it’s on to the castles; starting with the **Castello di San Michele** in the Val di Sole. Dominated by a soaring 25m keep, it stands on a crag overlooking the valley, and its commanding position made it a hot property amongst the region’s elite. Over the centuries it’s been the possession of the Prince-Bishops of Trento, the Counts of Tyrol-Görz, the de Federici family, the Heydorfs and Bertellis.

Next stop is the **Castel Caldes**: a rich mix of architectural styles (Venetian, German and Lombard) typical of this contested border region. The charming interior is famous for its frescoes. Legend has it that one of the rooms was painted by the young countess Marianna Elisabetta Thun, who was confined there by her father Rodemond, to prevent her from marrying for love, not material advantage. She’s said to have died of a broken heart as a result.

Our third fortress is the **Castel Valer**, which is owned by Count Ulrico Spaur and now open to the public. Girdled by apple orchards, and backed by soaring mountain mountain peaks, it’s a dramatic spot, and has the tallest castle tower in Trentino (40m).   
Last but by no means least is the mighty **Castel Thun**. Austere on the outside, richly-decorated within, this is one of Trentino’s most important historic monuments. It was built in the mid-13th century as the principal seat of the Thun family, and stayed in their possession for over 700 years. In 1992, it was bought by the province of Trento, and offers a fascinating perspective across nearly eight centuries of aristocratic life. It’s crammed full of grand family portraits and magnificent antiques, but the most sumptuous interior comes courtesy of the Bishop’s room, with its pinewood panelling, coffered ceiling and monumental doorway.

Throughout the tour, expert guides provide a commentary on the history, culture and landscape of the Val di Sole and the Val di Non. There’s also a chance to sample local food and wine – courtesy of the Strada della Mela consortium and the wine-makers of the Cantina Rotari Mezzacorona. The day ends with the return to Trento at 7.15pm.

Info: [www.iltreninodeicastelli.it](about:blank)

For further info about art and culture: [www.visittrentino.info/culture](http://www.visittrentino.info/culture)

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