

Sissi's Path



9 The Scented Garden
The Scented Garden is accessible via a narrow stone stairway. Surrounded by scented flowering bushes, one can rest on the wide terrace on old, pastel-white benches in complete detachment (yet just a short distance) from the busy Tappeiner Trail. The evergreen, majestic mountain laurel trees, a rarity outside Merano, are a further attraction of the Scented Garden. If you rub its leaves, the strong odor will remind you of the common bay tree, although the mountain laurel is not suitable for cooking.

10 The Belvedere
Who knows whether this rocky outcrop, next to which the Tappeiner Trail winds along the Küchelberg, was deliberately chosen as a lookout point. Whatever the reason, just a few steps lead up to wonderful views. The Belvedere is situated close to the end of the Tappeiner Trail in Gratsch near St. Peter. Those desiring more exercise can continue along the Algunder Waalweg, a path that follows an ancient irrigation channel.
Further information about the Algunder Waalweg:
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THE TERRAIN CURE THEN AND NOW
Walking is healthy, that much we know. Just how healthy was established in the second half of the 19th century by Professor M. J. Örtel from Munich. He invented the so-called *terrain cure*, or "walking on gently rising paths", whose extremely positive and strengthening effect on the circulatory system, on the lungs, heart and muscles he was able to prove. As Merano offered the right conditions for this cure, particularly on its promenades, it soon became a well-known resort for the terrain cure. The health-conscious Empress Elisabeth also tried it out in Merano.
We now know that Professor Örtel was right; brisk walking is widely considered one of the healthiest sports for all age groups. It keeps the body fit without risking wear to the joints.

THINGS TO SEE ON THE TAPPEINER TRAIL
5 The Gunpowder Tower
The Gunpowder Tower was originally part of a medieval fortification. In the 18th century it was used for storing gunpowder, hence its name. Its unique position makes the tower visible from afar: it marks the start of the Tappeiner Trail. The Powder Tower is open to visitors, and from its battlements offers magnificent views of Merano.

6 The public herb garden
South Tyrol's only public herb garden was created in 2002 and comprises 250 beds containing 230 different types of herbs and aromatic perennials. The garden's favorable location and Merano's mild climate make plant life here quite rich, with colors and aromas that are truly intoxicating, especially in spring.

7 The glacial abrasions
These witnesses to primeval forces indicate how the surrounding landscape was formed. Glacial abrasion is the result of the movement of glaciers. The constant flow of the glacial masses planed and smoothed the rock, while stones frozen in the ice carved deep grooves into the underlying rocks. Here, at the Tappeiner Trail, evidence of these glacial actions can clearly be seen in the hard gneiss stone.

8 The Mediterranean Terraces
The entrance to the Tappeiner Trail in close proximity to the Prince's Castle (Via Galilei) features a series of small, almost hidden terraces, which can be used as an alternative to the winding main path. Steep stone steps lead up to the platforms, which can hardly be seen from the entrance as the slopes are thickly overgrown with flowering prickly pear and winter jasmine. Pines, hemp palms, oleanders, and rockroses create a microcosm of southern European vegetation.

THINGS TO SEE ALONG THE GILF PROMENADE
1 The Ponte Romano
The *Steinerne Steg* or Ponte Romano is where the Winter and Summer promenades end, and where the Gifl Promenade begins. This, the oldest bridge over the Passer River, was built in the 17th century to replace a medieval wooden structure that linked Maia Alta to the town center.
The *Steinerne Steg* is often erroneously called "Ponte Romano", probably on account of its apparently Roman or ancient construction method.

2 The Plant figures
The frameworks for these green sculptures were made in the municipal smithy and then artistically filled by the town's own gardeners with various mosses, ferns and cushion plants. Next to Atlas holding the Earth on his shoulders, to an eagle and a snake, a woodpecker adorns a cedar and makes for a valuable store of raw materials for fellow members of its species to build nests.

3 The Gifl Gorge
The origin of the Gifl Gorge is closely connected to an enormous landslide in the Naif Valley. The Passer River was diverted along the side of the valley and, over thousands of years, formed a new path through the rocks.
Today the Gifl Gorge presents an impressive show of nature: just five minutes from the town center, the Passer roars through the narrow ravine, a testament to the enormous power of the elements that created it.

4 The Walk of Poets
In 1997, the Italian artist Marco Nereo Rotelli inscribed excerpts from poems by German or Italian authors into the benches along the Gifl Promenade. Quotations appear from the works of poets like Christian Morgenstern and Rainer Maria Rilke, as well as selected verses by the likes of Giuseppe Conte, Antonio Manfredo, and many others.

THE GILF PROMENADE
Created between 1871 and 1885, the Gifl Promenade begins at the 17th century Roman Bridge (1), the oldest bridge over the Passer River. It extends on both sides of the river, connecting with the Winter and the Summer Promenade, and leads upwards to Via Zenoberg and the Tappeiner Trail.
A must-see along the Gifl Promenade are the Plant figures (2) located in close proximity to the Gifl Gorge (3), where the Passer roars through a narrow ravine. Moreover, along the Walk of Poets (4) one can ponder selected verses written by famous authors.

The sheltered location of the Gifl Promenade and the microclimate that has developed in the ravine, have created a botanical garden with lush vegetation, including magnolias, hemp palms, redwoods, cedars and Asian pines.

Total length: 1 km

Altitude gain: approx. 50 m

Walking time (round trip): 15 minutes

Difficulty: very easy (universally accessible, family and pram-friendly)

Accessibility: all year

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THE TAPPEINER TRAIL
The Tappeiner Trail is one of the longest and most beautiful high-level promenades in Europe. This sunny path leads from the Gifl Promenade (see information on the right) over the slopes of the Küchelberg mountain to Gratsch, offering wonderful views from a height of 380 m. There are several entry and exit points: at the Gifl Gorge or the Ponte Romano (past the Gunpowder Tower), via the Tiroler Steig behind the Cathedral of St. Nicholas, in Via Galilei (at the bottom of the Küchelberg chairlift), and via the Schlehdorfsteig in Via Verdi.

The Tappeiner Trail owes its name to one of Merano's largest benefactors, the spa physician, anthropologist and botanist Dr Franz Tappeiner (1816-1902). His generous donations allowed the promenade to be built in three sections in 1893, 1911 and 1928.

The wide promenade is mostly flat. There are several restaurants and cafes en route, as well as a public toilet and drinking fountains.

Warmth-loving cypresses and pines give the Tappeiner Trail its character. Mediterranean shrubs, evergreen bushes, half-shrubs and succulents (e.g. olive trees, acacias, pomegranates, oleanders, agaves) contribute equally to its southern atmosphere.

Total length: about 4 km

Altitude gain: approx. 60 m

Walking time: about 1 hour

Difficulty: easy (universally accessible, family and pram-friendly)

Baby pushchair access: from Via Galilei, from the Gifl Promenade, via the Schlehdorfsteig in Via Verdi, or from Gratsch

Accessibility: all year

Bus service from Merano (train station or bus stop in Via delle Corse) to Gratsch: Line 236



SISSI'S PATH

This evocative route leads past Austrian Empress Elisabeth's favorite spots in Merano. The charming Habsburg sovereign, affectionately nicknamed *Sissi*, absolutely loved Merano and came here four times in the second half of the 19th century for health treatments.

It was in autumn of 1870 that Empress Elisabeth first arrived in Merano by coach to make her winter residence for her health. With its many visitors, the town of Merano became a health resort of great renown: Whoever could afford it made their holidays here, where the noblest of aristocrats were to be found.

The trail named in Elisabeth's honor leads from the town center to the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle, where she stayed twice. The path has eleven sights, each with a story to tell.

Total length: about 3 km

Altitude gain: approx. 45 m

Walking time: about 45 minutes

Difficulty: easy (family and pram-friendly)

Accessibility: all year (the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle are open from April to mid-November).

Bus service from Merano's town center to Trauttmansdorff: Lines 1B and 4

Sissi or Sisi?

Differing interpretations mean a preference for differing forms: Historians opt for *Sisi* or *Lisi* while, to guests from non-German speaking regions and film buffs the world over, the Empress is known only as *Sissi*. For this reason, the double-'s' form, is generally used in Merano.

1 Kurpromenade and Kurhaus

To see and be seen

Since 1850, the Kurpromenade has been the hub of Merano. Until 1918, it was called the *Gisela Promenade* in honor of Empress Elisabeth's daughter. Sissi could be seen almost every day at the Kurhaus spas with Gisela and her younger sister, Duchess Sophie of Alençon.

Centerpiece of the spa town

With the opening of the Kurhaus in 1874, Merano had a new attraction. In 1914, the neoclassical building was expanded in the decorative Art Nouveau style based on the plans of renowned Viennese architect Friedrich Ohmann, who had designed, among other things, the Hofburg in Vienna.

2 Elisabeth Park (universally accessible)

A majestic trail

Planting of cedar, pine and linden began along these walkways in 1860. On the occasion of the Austrian court's visit in 1870, the park was named after Empress Elisabeth's daughter Marie Valerie. In the following years, it was adorned with trick fountains and a music pavilion. Today it is called *Elisabeth Park*, and is part of the Summer Promenade. On hot summer days, the park offers pleasant freshness. The marble statue of the Empress by Viennese artist Hermann Klotz was unveiled in 1903.

3 The Wandelhalle

Promenading throughout the year

Dr Franz Tappeiner contributed this covered Art Nouveau arcade to the Winter Promenade in 1889. The busts, plaques and large pictures here honor those significant to the history of the spa town. Patients happily visited the sunny, wind-shielded promenade in the course of their therapy, particularly in winter. The Summer Promenade extends on the opposite side of the Passer River.

4 Ponte Romano

Overpass for strolling

Since the late 19th century, this bridge has provided a comfortable connection between the greenery of Maia Alta and Merano's town center. It replaced a narrow, wooden 17th century bridge, making it the oldest crossing of the Passer River. Upstream, across the river gorge, stands historic Zenoburg Castle.

5 Hotel Bavaria

Reminiscence of Bavaria

Two lions flank the entrance to this hotel. The Bavarian coat of arms' animals recall Karl Theodor, Sissi's favorite brother. The Bavarian Duke was held in high esteem in Merano and the surrounding area: as an optician, he provided free operations to the needy, granting eyesight to many.

6 Rottenstein Castle (privately owned)

Accommodation by rank

Here too, at her brother-in-law's castle, Sissi spent one of her stays in Merano. First documented in the late 13th century, Rottenstein Castle was acquired in 1863 by Archduke Karl Ludwig, Governor of Tyrol and brother of Emperor Franz Josef.

7 Piazza Fontana

Courtly hospitality

In the first decades of the 19th century, the early days of the health resort industry, lodging was scarce in Merano; the noble patients stayed mainly in the medieval residences of the present-day quarter of Maia Alta. In 1869, Merano's first hotel (the *Erzherzog Rainer*) was built at Piazza Fontana, which was named after Sissi's brother-in-law Karl Ludwig.

8 Reichenbach Residence (privately owned)

A therapeutic domicile

The attractiveness of a health resort depends greatly on the reputation of its doctors. Merano's renowned physician Dr Franz Tappeiner resided in this 14th century abode from 1854 to 1902. He served as medical advisor to Mayor Johann Valentin Haller, and in this capacity was one of the pioneers of the health resort business. Moreover, he conceived and co-financed the Tappeiner Trail (see back of this leaflet) overlooking Merano.

9 Ruben Castle (privately owned)

A fabulous refuge

This castle, completed in the 12th century, stands in the center of an expanded park. Upon Sissi's visit in autumn 1870, her royal entourage of 102 people was quartered here, at present-day Via Christomannos. Incidentally, Theodor Christomannos played a large role in the development of tourism in the Dolomites. His cousin Constantine was Sissi's courtly reader and constant companion for many years.

10 Pienzenau Castle (privately owned)

Hidden treasure

The path to this castle (first documented in 1394) leads past a lush park with venerable sequoias, cedars and pines. In 1870, when Empress Elisabeth and her attendants first arrived in Merano, Pienzenau's outbuildings were reconstructed to house her sizeable fleet of vehicles and 27 horses brought from Vienna. In addition, a special telegraphic connection between Pienzenau Castle, Ruben Castle and Trauttmansdorff Castle was established.

11 The Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle & the Touriseum

(universally accessible)

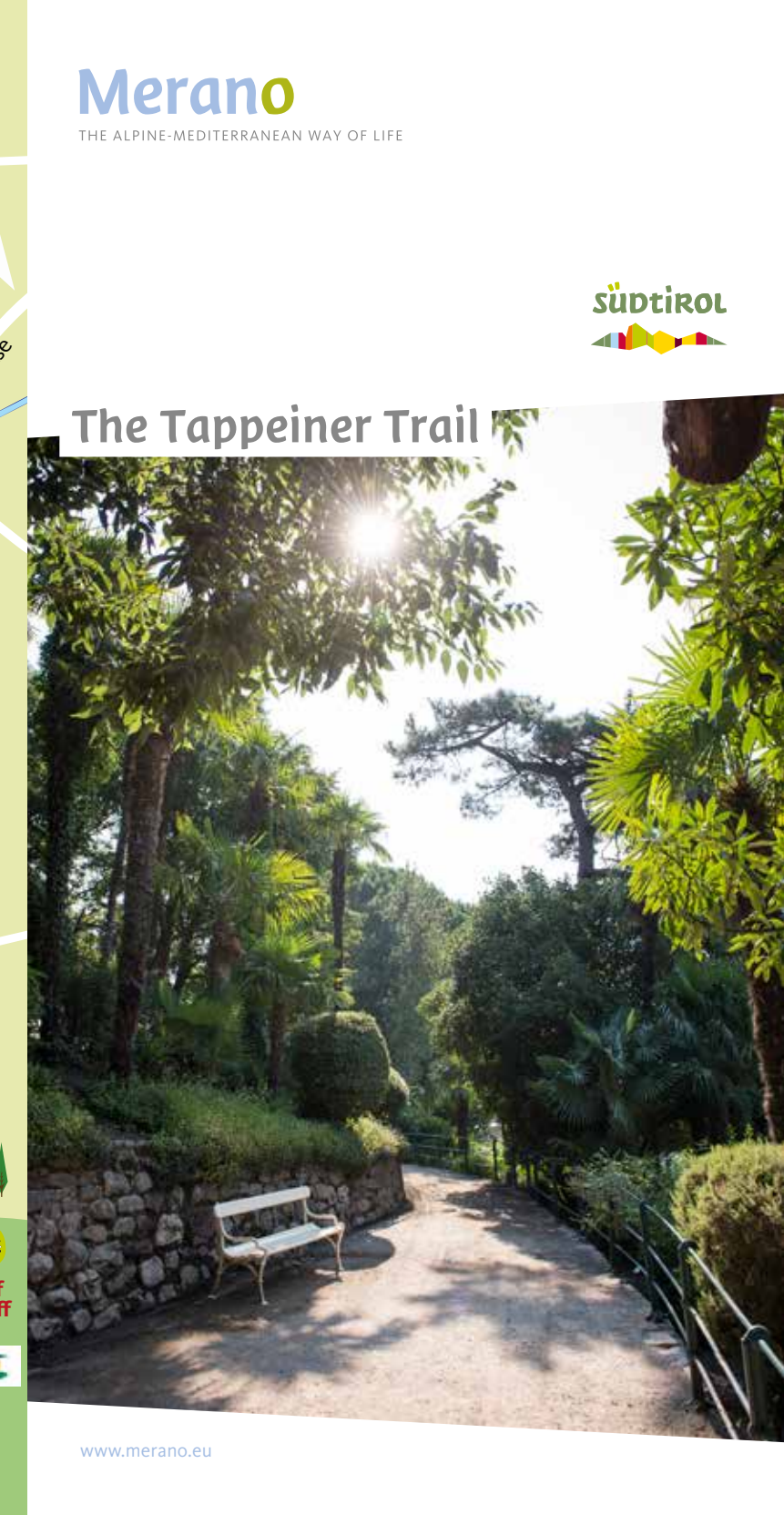
Blossoming gardens and eventful tourism history

Since 2001, the sunny slopes above Merano have been home to the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle, where plants from all over the world thrive in over 80 garden landscapes. Rebuilt by Count Trauttmansdorff from medieval ruins in 1850, the imposing castle towering majestically in their midst today houses the Touriseum, South Tyrol's Museum of Tourism. Tourism in Merano first began to flower after Empress Sissi's sojourns, to whom a permanent exhibition is now dedicated.

Empress Elisabeth also left her own mark on the Gardens, where her "delightful footpaths, scattered with fine gravel" today lead through the steep white-oak woods to Matteo Thun's Viewing Platform, and where, on Sundays in early summer, a sublime Breakfast at Sissi's is offered on the stately Sissi Terrace. Moreover, the Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle are part of Sisi's Road, a cultural route of 1,400 kilometers tracing Her Majesty's steps through six countries (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Italy, Greece and Switzerland). A unique blend of botanical garden and recreational facility, Trauttmansdorff's successful combination of nature, culture and art – together with its distinctive spirit of innovation – has garnered it several major awards, as well as recognition well beyond the borders of South Tyrol.

» **Info:** The Gardens of Trauttmansdorff Castle
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THE GARDENS OF
TRAUTTMANSDORFF CASTLE



The Tappeiner Trail