**From 7 May to 16 September, take the mini-train to the Trentino Castles**

**TRAVEL BY TRAIN THROUGH HISTORY AND CULTURE**

**Spend a weekend discovering some of the most scenically attractive castles in Trentino… by railway. Once again this year, after last summer’s enormous success and full bookings, tourists will be able to visit four of Trentino’s most interesting castles – San Michele and Caldes in Val di Sole, Valer and Thun in Val di Non – by train, in an interesting and scenic journey through history, art and the landscape on the Trento-Malé route. This year’s package also features three days of fun for children**

Enjoy a new – and slower – way of discovering Trentino and its historic castles, scenically located amidst vineyards and apple orchards. For the second year, from 7 May to 16 September, these impressive manors in the Non and Sole valleys can easily be reached by train, just like the travellers of bygone days. This year, the scenic railway also features lots of attractions for kids who, on three Sundays – 31 July, 7 and 21 August – will be able to travel at discounted rates and take part in some special events proposed at the single castles, ranging from workshops to guided tours and a treasure hunt for the whole family.

**The programme**

The train of the Trento-Malé railway leaves Trento at 8.45, and tourists, travelling in dedicated carriages, are served a special breakfast with products by Melinda and Latte Trento. Climbing up the slopes of the Noce valley, the first stop is at Castello San Michele, at Ossana, from where the visitors descend by bus to Castel Caldes, which for centuries controlled the entrance to Val di Sole. The third stop is at Castel Valer, now an elegant private residence easily distinguishable for its very tall polygonal tower, and from there to Castel Thun with its refined ambiance. Then it’s back to Trento, by bus, at about 19.15.

All four castles have been fully restored and can now reveal their full beauty to visitors. Other highlights of the day include events coordinated by the Strada della Mela e dei Sapori (Route of Apples and Flavours) of Val di Non and Val di Sole, offering an opportunity to taste excellent local food and wine specialties.

**First stop – Ossana Castle**

The castle, in the village of the same name, also known as Castello di San Michele after the saint to whom the castle chapel is dedicated, rises in a strategic position on the top of a crag. It was probably built in the Lombard period, although it is first mentioned in writing in 1191. Over the centuries, it has been the possession of various noble families, from the Prince-Bishops of Trento to the Counts of Tyrol-Görz, then, in the 15th century, the investiture passed to the de Federici family, followed by the Heydorfs and Bertellis. At the turn of the 20th century, one of the co-owners of the castle was Bertha von Suttner, Nobel Peace Prize laureate in 1905. The castle has a mighty 25 m tall keep, which is its most characteristic – and best preserved – architectural feature.

**Second stop – Castel Caldes**

This castle is the result of a mix of different cultural influences and styles (Venetian, German and Lombard) typical of this border area of the Prince-Bishopric of Trento. The interior is charming, with vaulted ceilings, wood panelling and frescoed walls. Particularly interesting are the “Count’s Room” and the ballroom. At the top of wooden stairs, in the tower, is a room with an entirely frescoed ribbed vault ceiling, which is the setting of some ancient legends about the captivity of Olinda, or the unfortunate young countess Marianna Elisabetta Thun. The story goes that the young woman was confined here by her father Rodemond, to prevent her from marrying a young man who was not of noble stock, as a result of which she died of lovesickness. Legend has it that the frescoes in the room are actually the work of this young woman.

After the guided tour, the anticipated lunch prepared by the Trentino Chef Association will be served, with wines and bubbles from the Rotari Mezzacorona winery.

**Third stop – Castel Valer**

Castel Valer rises near the village of Tassullo, in a panoramic location surrounded by fruit orchards. Its octagonal tower, which, at 40 metres tall, is the highest in Trentino, is partly made of imported granite and stands out as the most impressive in the whole province. The first mention of Castel Valer dates back to 1211, when it served as a military outpost and was owned by the Counts of Eppan.

The surrounding defensive walls, which highlight the growth of the castle over the centuries, follow the octagonal plan of the ancient tower and enclose two sets of buildings forming the castle complex: the oldest, dating back to the 14th century, is called Castel di Sotto (Lower Castle), while the newer one, built in the 16th century, is the Castel di Sopra (Upper Castle).

Generally closed to the public, the complex can be visited only on this occasion, by courtesy of the current owner Count Ulrico Spaur.

**Fourth stop – Castel Thun**

Castel Thun, located at Vigo di Ton, was built in the mid-13th century as the principal seat of the powerful Thun family, which also owned other prestigious houses in the Non and Sole valleys. It is one of the most interesting examples of Trentino castle architecture: the civilian and military structure is essentially Gothic and is surrounded by a complex system of fortifications, formed by towers, crescent-shaped bastions, moats and wall-walks. Among its many rooms, still richly furnished and adorned with many artworks, the most sumptuous is undoubtedly the so-called “Bishop’s Room”, with its pinewood panelling, coffered ceiling and monumental doorway. Castel Thun is one of the most important public monuments in Trentino, not only because of its good state of repair, but also because it recounts the eight-century long history of the Prince Bishops.

At the end of the tour, and before returning to Trento, visitors can enjoy a medicinal herb tea in a wonderful old world atmosphere.

The “Trenino dei Castelli” event is sponsored by the Department of Culture of the Autonomous Province of Trento and organised by the Apt’s (Tourist Boards) of Val di Non-Val di Sole and Trento-Monte Bondone-Valle dei Laghi, in partnership with Trentino Marketing, as part of the project for enhancing the Trentino Castles Network.

Info: [www.iltreninodeicastelli.it](file:///C:\Users\bassettic\AppData\Local\Microsoft\Windows\Temporary%20Internet%20Files\Content.Outlook\H19993AE\www.iltreninodeicastelli.it)

(L. Io.)

Trento, April 2016