**Freeride: the power of the powder, off-piste passions**

**"CULT" SLOPES ON THE DOLOMITES AND ADAMELLO-PRESANELLA**

**Adventures in deep snow: the offer of many local ski resorts has been enriched by tracks and slopes dedicated to this discipline, which is the most advanced technically of all skiing. With the #weridesafe project and events such as the King of Dolomites, San Martino di Castrozza is set to become the prime spot for all lovers of this sport, with a cutting-edge culture in terms of off-piste safety. The first controlled** "**Freeride Park**" **opens in Passo San Pellegrino**

Inaugurating a track with fresh snow, tracing your own trajectory, drawing breath-taking curves and jumping, leaping in the air from a natural springboard, all give a sense of freedom that you can experience to the fullest on the Dolomites of Trentino. Remarkable landscapes that become even more amazing if observed from a different perspective, the off-piste. A total fusion with the snow-capped environment, slopes, gutters and gullies to be faced in absolute freedom - though, of course, with the necessary preparation and always with due caution. Whether you venture on a path in the woods or a steep descent to be tackled headlong, the freeride is an unmissable experience, ideal for those who enjoy thrills outside the box. A due premise is that this sport involves the risks that are typical of all sports practised in the mountains in winter, and therefore, always calls for:

* suitable mental and physical condition and ski-mountaineering skills;
* the right equipment and gear (including safety and self-rescue devices – avalanche transceiver, shovel, probe);
* knowing how to read and decipher an avalanche and weather bulletin;
* knowledge of the territory where you are skiing and of the potential hazards (pile-ups of snow, avalanche-prone slopes, crevasses, icy segments, cliffs).

In particular, an avalanche transceiver, shovel and probe are essential tools for whoever practises off-piste skiing. They can save your life in the midst of an avalanche, if you know how to use them quickly, but they do not make you immune from danger, which should be avoided foremost... using your head.

The town that has invested more than others to spread a culture of safety in freeride is **San Martino di Castrozza**. Thanks to the project **#weridesafe** launched last winter at the start of the main ski-lifts, the areas where skiers are allowed to run off track have been mapped, and the main rules for practising this sport safely have been neatly summarised. **Alpe Tognola** and the valleys in the heart of he **Pale di San Martino**, a Unesco World Heritage site, offer daring descents, breath-taking views, extreme nature, steep gullies and tons of powder. These features have not gone unnoticed by the major brands in the industry, which have chosen this location to organise again some of the most important freeride events worldwide in 2016, like **King of Dolomites** by Arc'Teryx (February 18-21, 2016) and the **Climb to Ski Camp** by Salewa (March 2016). During the season, the "Aquile" (Eagles), the local mountain guides, organise weekly courses on rescue techniques, "powder baptisms" for the less experienced and breathtaking downhill runs on the most classic itineraries of the Dolomites.

There are plenty of tracks and itineraries in the fresh snow also in the ski-area of **Val di Fassa**. For those who want to test their skills, the ski schools of the valley organise courses and lessons with an instructor and descents in fresh snow, without forgetting to learn everything there is to know about safety.

On **Col Margherita**, over Passo San Pellegrino, instead, a true "**Freeride Park**" has opened. It is the first "authorised" freeride track in Trentino, and offers the possibility to have fun in the snow in safe conditions on a bordered track, provided with sign posts and monitored by qualified staff. The track can be reached from the Pass by the Col Margherita cable car.

Among the "cult" tracks, the most popular are the freerides of **Val Lasties** and **Val Mesdì** that start from the top of Sass Pordoi and are reserved for advanced skiers. The descent from **Forcella Pordoi** to the Pass is a medium-level track. These routes obviously are not monitored or delimited, and you ski them at your own risk and danger. On Belvedere, atop **Canazei**, instead, we find the "Diego Freeride": easy to reach with the ski-lifts, it offers a track of more than 1,000 metres in the heart of the sunny ski-area between white bumps and superb views of the Dolomites.

The ski-area at **Passo del Tonale** is definitely the best destination for off-piste skiing in all of Western Trentino, thanks to a series of factors, such as the altitude (you ski between 1900 m and 3000 m), the exposure (largely to the north) and the morphology of the land, with a series of valleys and gullies of varying tilt and levels. Rides such as "Il Cantiere", "Sgualdrina", "Canale del Diavolo" or "Canale del Dito", easily accessible thanks to the new cable car that climbs up to the 2,992 m of Passo di Maroccaro, and short slopes to climb with seal skins, attract freeride enthusiasts from across Europe.

The mountain guides of Trentino know these terrains very well and are available both for accompanying aficionados of the sport, and for organising off-piste skiing, ski mountaineering and avalanche self-rescue courses.

(m.b.)

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