

# Brenta Dolomites Sep 2019.

by Leonie Cann



*Bochette Central above Alimonta – Leonie Cann*

It was late in the season after a summer of unsettled weather; no surprise that a day of rain was forecast for the first day of our Brenta trip. The group of six (Ellie, Ella, Elizabeth, Leonie, Chris and Jim) decided we could tolerate a few hours of wet while walking to the XII Apostoli Hut because the forecast for the following day (for our first via ferrata), was good.

**Day 1:** After a luxurious night in the Hotel Spinale in Madonna di Campiglio set off on the bus in the rain aiming for the first lift from Pinzolo at 8am. An extra layer of clothing was needed to tackle the next chilly ride on the open chairlift to Dos del Sabion. It was a relief to start walking and warm up. Downhill first and the weather seemed to ease a bit as we slipped down the muddy track. About an hour later we were heading up again as the snow started. A cabled route up some shiny, wet, slippery rock needed extra care. The route seemed to be a lot longer than planned in the conditions and we were pleased to finally see Rifugio XII Apostoli above us. Soon we were dripping happily in the shoe room of the hut while peeling off wet outer layers of clothing and shoes. The hut heater and hot soup/pasta for lunch were most welcome.

The hut warden said our planned route for the next day was off the agenda as snow would be too deep to climb to the Bocchette dei Due Denti to get to the top of the VF Castiglioni ladders. Likewise, escape via Senterio dell' Ideale and VF Martinazzi to the Brentei Hut was not an

option. So, we decided to retrace our steps down to the valley from where we could climb up the following day to continue our planned itinerary.

**Day 2:** Bright sunshine, snow, spikes/crampons on, and a careful but pleasant trip down to Lago di Val d'Agola for lunch. From the lake we followed the valley down, eventually turning eastward and upwards past the waterfalls of Vallesinella to the welcoming Rifugio Casinei (voted best hut of the walk).

**Day 3:** We were blessed with more good weather and great views for the walk to Rifugio Brentei, before tackling the snowfield up to Pedrotti Hut for lunch. Jim and I had an afternoon walk to check out the originally planned route towards Rif Agostini. As the snow became quite deep, we decided the group's detour had been a good idea.

**Day 4:** A magnificent sunrise heralded a stunning day for the VF Bochette Centrale. Crampons to get to the start, but once on the ferrata the beginning was quite clear for an exposed traverse on stemples across the cliffs, and around ledges. Turning out of the sun there was more snow on the track and we were glad that others had trodden the path before us. A few slippery descents with and without cable, some ladders and lots of ledges with fantastic scenery. Ending the ferrata above Rifugio Alimonta we 'spiked up' for the last descent down the glacier to the hut.

**Day 5:** Half the group decided to climb the VF Oliva Detassis first; climbing up to the Bochette Massodi (where it meets the Bochette Alte) gave great views down the snow filled valley from the great heights attained on the vertical ladders.

VF SoSat, although a lower level route than planned also had its share of up and down. Stemples now replace the famous old ladders descending a deep gully. A wonderful sunny slope yielded plenty of butterflies and flowers, including some late flowering Devil's Claw. It was a long walk around and across the moraine to Rifugio Tuckett after VF SoSat, but once at the hut it was a lovely afternoon for sitting outside in the sun with refreshments and looking at the next day's route.

**Day 6:** The climb up to the VF Benini which looked daunting from the hut, turned out to be much easier and assisted by cabling on Senterio attrezzato Dallagiacomà. This VF is a traverse for most of the route, starting up quite high with ledges leading along the side of the mountains. Another day of sunshine with lots of vapour trails across the sky made for great photos. After the cables it was a longish snowy walk across to the Groste Cable Car before heading down to Madonna di Campiglio on the lift.

After dubious weather at the start of the trip, it ended up a great week in the mountains with some snowy challenges, enjoyed by all. The final route showed us some wonderful parts of the Brenta Group we would otherwise have missed. Thanks to Ellie for putting the program together, and adapting it "on the hoof", doing all the bookings and leading us safely and comfortably throughout.



*VF Benini - Leonie Cann*