

## *Cafés and coffeehouses in Trento (as of February 29, 2007)*

Italy is wine and women and song :) And that's fine with me, as it is. It is, also, the land of cafés (here called *caffés*) and espresso<sup>1</sup> bars. Given my preferences, that's a bonus if there ever was one. In Italian cafés and espresso bars you often cannot dwell, or are not supposed to dwell (as the differential pricing scheme for coffee drinks at the counter strongly suggests<sup>2</sup>); just stand at the counter (which typically is made beautifully from wood and marmor and dominates the space), engage in banter and conversation, or read one of the newspapers that are provided for that purpose in large numbers, and leave. So, it is something of a challenge to find **a café or coffeehouse where you can sit comfortably and read and write and think**. Below is my top ten of such places in picturesque Trento, Trentino, Italy.<sup>3</sup> There is also a brief watch list and a list of places that are definitely not recommended.

### *1. Bar al Duomo*

Via Verdi 40, tel 0461-98.11.99

I go here every morning between 7 and 8. I mean EVERY morning between 7 and 8, except Sundays but that's their fault. I always have a couple of cappucc(in)i and one or two brioches alla crema. Most excellent. It's just a great place to sit and read or edit, and watch the regulars. I also go here during the day although it tends to get pretty crowded during lunchtime and late afternoons. They have a good selection of sandwiches (try the *Tirolese*) and some excellent *tramezzini*. The prices are reasonable (where can you still get a cappuccino for a mere € 1.10 "downtown"?) and the waitstaff is nice and attentive (although it does not speak much English). Really, the only minus is that they are closed on Sundays. How, the hell, dare they? I guess the bad environment [remember, it's the bar al duomo] does it.

### *2. Pasticceria Caffetteria Viennese*

Corso 3 Novembre 2, tel 0461-236490

The frontroom is your typical pasticceria, with a counter for a quick espresso, and lots of

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<sup>1</sup> An espresso is rarely called that here; it goes by the name of *caffè* or *caffè liscio*.

<sup>2</sup> Incidentally, when 2 out of about 30 cafés in Trento recently dared to increase the price of the espresso at the counter from 90 to 95 cents, it caused a front page article ("*Caffé <salato>: tazzina a 95 centesimi. Prezzo ritoccato in due bar del centro storico.*" *Trentino* 26 febbraio 2008, p. 1 and p. 13 [full page article]) in the regional press. You gotta love a people who care about the important little things in life!

<sup>3</sup> A similar list for cafés and coffeehouses in Praha may be found at [home.cerge-ei.cz/ortmann/Links/CafesCoffeehousesinPrahaMK.pdf](http://home.cerge-ei.cz/ortmann/Links/CafesCoffeehousesinPrahaMK.pdf) (Similar lists for other places will follow my teaching assignments :))

I'm proud to report that my Praha list now has its very own link on Ariel Rubinstein's, as – STOP THE PRESS - has this list. :)

A Worldwide Guide for Coffee Places where you can not only work but also think! at

<http://arielrubinstein.tau.ac.il/univ-coffee.html>

good brioche, panini, tramezzini, and sweets (the name of this café is not promising too much); the backroom – the “bistrot” as they call it – is a curious construct of two tents of the kind that you see in gardens occasionally; but you can sit there wonderfully – especially on that side that has the lights –; the wares are good (including the vitello tonnato, and other little snacks [chicken, hare] they serve for lunch but excluding the spinach quiche which is not up to snuff by a wide margin), as is the service. And, yes, the coffee is good too. Not the best to be had in Trento but good. And all is priced reasonably; the ham & cheese sandwich is, at € 3, a real steal. Oh, they tend to play the music not too loud and the music they play is even interesting sometimes. If there is overflow, try the *Bar 3 Portoni* at Via S. Croce 48, about 200 meters away towards the “downtown”

### 3. *Pasticceria Bertelli*

Via Oriola 29, tel 0461-984765

This is a high-quality place pretty much in the center of Trento.

It sells its own recipe book (and if you are attractive and female, the boss might sell it to you himself and give you a discount :) ) The café (which is sculpted like a cave) is separated from the shop and a rather stylish, and beautiful, place: black floor, black tables, black chairs, interspersed with blue-ish sofas for two (or, lonely professors with lots of papers to carry around) , and walls and ceiling painted in a glossy vanilla. The wares are excellent, the coffee is good (albeit not the best and a bit expensive: a cappuccino costs € 1.60), but the service is reasonably good. Only drawback: because of all the nice things this place has to offer, it tends to be often crowded. Life is tough.

### 4. *Caffé Tridente*

P.zza Duomo 31

One of three cafés on the P.zza Duomo [the other two being *Caffé Portici*<sup>4</sup> and *Caffé Italia*<sup>5</sup>], with great view on the church, the plaza, and the mountains if you sit outside.

They have a good wine card and decent coffee (that is reasonably priced, to boot: the cappuccino is a mere € 1.40). Plus their service is quite good. A big selling point: they open every Sunday at 7.

### 5. *Bar al teatro*

Mazzurana 15, tel 0461-230070

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<sup>4</sup> *Caffé Portici*, P.zza duomo 40, tel 0461-262000

The café itself is a little hole in the wall (although somewhat nicer than the café Italia [see next entry]. It is one of three cafés on the P.zza Duomo [the other two being *Caffé Tridente* and *Caffé Italia*], with great view on the church, the plaza, and the mountains if you sit outside. They have decent coffee that almost justifies the price (the cappuccino is a € 1.50 but it is Illy café that is fairly strong). Service is also reasonably good. A big selling point: they open every Sunday at 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Caffé Italia*, P.zza duomo 7, tel 0461-985265

The café itself is also a little hole in the wall; really just meant for someone to dart in and out and in-between have a coffee. But ... when you can sit outside (and you can sit outside as early as February :)), you have a great view of the church, the piazza, and the mountains (specifically the cliff on which the congress center Panorama sits). While the sandwiches are nothing to write home about, they do have decent coffee (that is reasonably priced, to boot: the cappuccino is a mere € 1.30). Now also open on Sundays.

Located next to the Teatro Sociale, or city theater, it's a very nice space with all the standard goodies. Very crowded during lunchtime because of all the goodies (albeit a bit on the pricy side, although they just reduced their coffee prices - get that !). In the summer one can also sit outside in the pedestrian zone and see and be seen. In the summer, *Bar al teatro* transforms into an ice parlor of note. The place is apparently owned by an old couple. Whenever they are working behind the counter together you can count on being served, together with your cappucco or whatever it is that you have, great scenes from a dysfunctional marriage. Grand live theatre, and that for free. You read about it here first :)

#### 6. *Caffe Carducci*

Largo Carduzzi 25, 0461-235261

A great location – about two hundred meters away from the Café Bertelli - and a place with potential. All the standard offerings and then some: *caffé*, *colazioni*, *apertivi*, *enoteca*, *pasticceria*, *bistro* (as advertised on a sign outside). The café itself is tripartite, with an espresso bar in the entrance area/middle room, and a room to the left and right. The food – in particular the various panini – are good but not spectacular. No match for sure for the Café Viennese or Bar al Duomo or Café Bertelli.

They are often crowded by the young in-crowd. That's probably because they often blast the music they play at high volume.

#### 7. *Bar 3 Portoni*

Via S. Croce 48, 0461-986606

This pleasant and nice place is located on the way to the Café Viennese when coming from “downtown”. Great if *Café Viennese* has overflow. Coffee and food are fine although nothing compared to the top three on this list. But it is a place where one can sit and read and write and think and even watch a bit.

#### 8. *Caffé Antico Comercio*

Via Mantoua 39, tel 0461-238800

The café is not the most inviting and is located in a street with little traffic; it is therefore frequented not by the tourist crowd but older locals. Coffee and panini are good and it's a good place to work if you really have to focus (especially in the very back of the room). Closed on Sundays but open at 6:30 on weekdays for an early fix on the day!

#### 9. *Golden Eagle*

Via Belenzani 76, tel 0461-986282

A pretty stylish place on the inside, with a street bar outside. Open daily at 7 (including Sundays) and for long hours (until 11 Friday - Sunday). Plus, they do offer free wifi! The dolci are very good and the coffee is o.k.

#### 10. *Caffé (Ristorante) Universita*

Via Prati 6, tel 0461-236524

This is a something of a strange café with the stylish charm of an office. And the waitstuff seems always in a bad mood. Probably because the café is often empty. Not sure what the causality is here. But, if you are in need of a space where to work, this

may qualify.

*Watch list:*

Caffé (Osteria) Trentina  
Caffé Nettuno  
Caffé di Giorgio  
Caffé Excelsior  
Caffé Commercio  
Antico Caffé Commercio  
Caffé Citta  
Caffé Marchiodi  
Caffé Trieste

*Not recommended:*

*Caffé Olimpia* (Via Rodolfo Belenzani 33, across the street from the best ice cream shop in town) - does have wifi but at ripoff prices; sandwiches and coffee o.k. but surely nothing to write home about

*Bar Pasi* (pizza Pasi 1, next to a well-sorted enoteca) - not a bad café and coffee and foodstuff are actually o.k. but it's hangout for the local young hot shots and their onlookers, and hence often crowded and noisy. Not the kind of place I cherish.

*Bar S. Chiara* (across the street from *Bar 3 Portoni*, see above) - run-down, soggy sandwiches, average coffee, not a place to sit and dwell

*(Bar) Caffé (Pasticceria) S. Vigilio* (Via S. Vigilio 10) - this place has some potential but the people working there seem not much interested, the coffee is not that good, and the dolci are not that good either.

*Caffé Mozart* (Via Verdi 34, a couple of houses down from the Bar al Duomo) - an uninspiring little hole in the wall, mostly empty, uninviting.

*Caffé Verdi* (Via Verdi 31) - student hangout with large tv screens, darkish, loudish - I never heard a piece by Verdi there, though: Whatever happened to truth in advertising?