

# Dolomites: etymology & touristic milestones



The beginning of the Industrial Revolution in England in the late 18th century brought upheaval to the Alpine region. Viewed as threatening and eerie until the late modern era, the Alps were being discovered as an attractive destination for tourists and mountaineers. Initially Switzerland was most popular among mountaineers.

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## Etymology

The “Pale Mountains”, as the Dolomites are also known, did not gain popularity among mountaineers until several decades later. In the early stages of this development it was scientists who became interested in this region. French researcher Deodat de Dolomieu (1750 – 1801) went on several excursions to the Tyrol mountains around the year of 1790. He described these seemingly familiar calcareous rocks as non-calcitic minerals. Chemical examinations confirmed his suspicions. Initially only a handful of English-speaking mineralogists used the term “Dolomites” in their papers. This changed as soon as the first, English mountaineers and tourists arrived. J. Gilbert and G.C. In 1864 George Cheetham Churchill published his book “The Dolomite Mountains” in London. In it Gilbert and Churchill describe in great detail the excursions on which they went in Tyrol, Kaernten, the Carnic Alps, and Friuli. The term “Dolomites” was used for the first time to refer to this entire region. Renowned geologists at that time rejected the term. After the First World War, however, this term was widely used in general speech but also in science.

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## Touristic milestones

There are a number of key developments that led to the eastern Alpine region being developed as a tourist destination and as a destination for business. These key developments are of great importance and some of them even took place in the 21st century. Here are some of them:

alpine clubs were founded in Austria and Germany in the 1860s. Hiking trails were established and improved, signposts were put up, small mountain huts were built, and the training of guides first began.

at the end of the first/second half of the 19th century rail links were being built. When the Pustertalbahn railway started operating between Lienz and Franzensfeste in the autumn of 1871, travelling to the northern Dolomites became relatively easy, fast, predictable, and comparatively cheap. The railway became central to tourism in the region. This trend continued up until the second half of the 20th century.

the innkeepers' commitment and their hard work and determination helped build businesses in the hospitality sector. It is these people who, thanks to their vision, have made a huge contribution to the development of tourism in the region.

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## Important first ascents

The second half of the 19th century saw important peak victories in the Dolomites. Irish natural scientist and mountaineer John Ball climbed Monte Pelmo (3168 m) in 1857. This was the first ascent of a mountain in the Dolomites by a tourist. Vienna-born Paul Grohmann went on a few important first ascents with a local guide. These took him to Marmolata (1864), the Langkofel (1869) or the Grosse Zinne (1869). In the Dolomites of Prags (Braies) it was Viktor Wolf Edler von Glanvell who, with a combination of careful planning, a great sense of direction, and the courage to go on an adventure, discovered new ascents and actually used these routes himself.

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