

Hot Rock Trip – Arco / Lake Garda, Italy 18th July – 1st August 2009

The Climbing Mecca that is Arco is located at the north end of Lake Garda, Italy. With its Mediterranean micro-climate, if clipping bolts in the sun is your bag, Arco is your place! There are literally thousands of single and multi-pitch routes of every grade from 2b to 8c within minutes of the campsite.

Mountain walking and the well renowned via ferattas of the Dolomites are also well within reach with the high and exciting Brenta region only an hour's drive away. There are also several lower level vias around Arco.

But Arco isn't only about climbing, it's also the ideal location for water sports, walking, biking, horse riding, sight seeing, arts and culture or just a relaxing family holiday in the sun!

In short the opportunities are endless, there is literally something for everyone! A trip not to be missed!



- Logistics:** The dates stated are Saturday to Saturday, but bear in mind it may comfortably take two days to get down to Arco from Birmingham by car. If you don't want to do the journey in one go, you could get an early ferry on Saturday morning, take a night in a cheap hotel in southern Germany on Saturday night before finishing off the journey on Sunday to arrive in Arco mid afternoon. It is possible to get the afternoon ferry on Friday, drive a couple of hours the other side before getting a night's sleep and doing the rest of the journey to arrive in Arco on Saturday night. Assuming arrival on Sunday afternoon, you can then spend 11 nights on the Campsite at Arco. It's advisable to get a good start on the Saturday of departure, a full days driving could put you in Belgium, have a night in a motel to get a late morning ferry on the Sunday arriving back in Birmingham mid afternoon.
- By Plane:** It is easiest to fly into Verona, which is just south of Lake Garda, and around 1 hour by car from Arco. Alternatively you can get a train from Verona to Rovereto which is then only 20mins away from Arco if someone is collecting you. As far as I know the only airline to do cheap rides into Verona are Ryan air, from Stanstead. If you are considering hiring a car, there are other options, for example, Innsbruck is not too far and has flights from just about all UK airports.
- Campsite:** Depending on the preferences of those going (and availability) we will use one or other of the following campsites, both of which are located at the foot of the castle cliff, within walking distance of the town centre. Han and Steve stayed on both sites last year, both are more than suitable, but each has pro's and con's as you will read below. The downfalls are pointed out in the sites not to put anyone off, but to help you choose which site you would prefer, both are excellent places to spend a holiday and we will make a group decision nearer the time as to which one we use.

Both sites include electric hook-up on every pitch, use of all the facilities and sports courts etc as standard.

- **Camping Arco** (<http://www.camping.it/english/trentino/arco/info.asp>); This site was built relatively recently and is noticeably newer in appearance than Camping Zoo, it has a whole host of facilities, including tennis courts, badminton and a bouldering wall (see their website for a full run-down). The site is effectively the town's municipal campsite and is located next to the municipal (Olympic size) swimming pool, which you have free use of during its opening hours (usually 9am - 5pm - there are however strict rules, silly swimming hats and jobs worth lifeguards, so arsing about is kept to a minimum). There are a large number of toilet and shower blocks that are all pretty new, although we did find that these were not kept overly clean when the site was especially busy, there were also times when the hot water ran out in the older shower block. Pitches are very large and easily cater for the large standard issue club tents, or those taking caravan's, some are amongst the tree's near the river, and others in open fields with some tree's for a bit of shelter. There is free wireless internet around the shop and reception etc, and the usual host of washing and drying facilities on coin operated machines. Camping Arco is the more expensive option, fees can tot up here as they do charge for dogs and additional cars unlike the Zoo.

Costs: 2 people + pitch for 11 nights: **309.10€** (Pitch 11.50€ / Adult 8.30€ per night)

- **Camping Zoo** (<http://www.camping.it/english/trentino/zoo/info.asp>); This site has been around a bit longer and is located about 1km further out along the same road as Camping Arco, also on the banks of the River Sarca. Camping Zoo is set in a peaceful spot, mostly amongst the tree's, a little more rudimentary than Camping Arco, but much less strict about being quiet at night etc. The site has all the same range of toilet and shower facilities, although older, we found them to be nice and clean and always plentiful with the hot water. The guy in the reception/shop is very friendly and always keeps a stock of ice cold beers in the fridge for a reasonable enough price to warrant several trips in an evening! Camping Zoo has less sports facilities, but does however have its own swimming pool which is pretty large and stays open till the reception shuts (usually around 11pm). Washing machines and tumble driers available on coin meters. There is a nice pizzeria/bar about 500m up the road for nights out without walking all the way into town.

Costs: 2 people + pitch for 11 nights: **275€** (Pitch 10€ / Adult 7.50€ per night)

Costs: As with everything at the moment, the costs are going to be higher than we might like. There are however ways of minimising the costs (such as sharing the giant pitches that you get on these campsites), and camping is still the best value for money option for us adventurous types!

- **Campsite Fees:** see above and individual campsite websites for full costings
- **Transport Costs, Driving:** Ferry crossing prices are likely to be around **£100** for a standard car with up to 4 passengers – see www.Norfolkline.com/ferry. I would advise booking soon as the costs have already increased over the last month. It is approx 1000 miles driving from Birmingham to Arco or slightly longer if you go through Germany (no auto route tolls though). If your car is reasonably economic it is likely to cost around **£240** in fuel for the round trip based on a cost of 12p/mile, plus any extra fuel for getting to and from crags, etc.
- **Transport Costs, Flying:** Ryan Air Stanstead to Verona-Brescia is approx **£120** per person return. You can then either hire a car or get the train direct to Rovereto which is 20mins from Arco for someone to collect you.

- **Food & Entertainment:** how long is a piece of string? Supermarket shopping is pretty comparable to budgeting at home, only fresh fruit and traditional fare is of much better quality and value for money. Beer and wine is pretty cheap from the supermarket, but relatively expensive in bars and restaurants. Pizza or pasta main dishes in a restaurant would cost around £8 and the pizza's are huge. It is possible to have a great holiday here without spending a huge amount in restaurants and bars, entertainment is largely the lake with it's beaches, and the hills around us, so the costs here are mostly minimal.

Climbing: 50 areas, 63 crags, 2130 single pitch sport climbing routes ranging from 2b to 8c+, more than 70 multi-pitch climbing routes, 125 bouldering problems. For lovers of technical slabs or steep overhangs, or for those who enjoy climbing on infinite walls and airy multi-pitch routes, there couldn't be more choice.

Guide Books: **Arco Rock** – Sarca Valley – Trento – Rovereto – Giudicarie Valleys – Brenta Dolomites. **Via Ferratas** of the Italian Dolomites Vol 2: Southern Dolomites, Brenta & Lake Garda – Cicerone Guide.

Website Information Sources:

http://www.coronn.com/TOPOS/italy/arco/arco.html	Topos and climbing information
http://lakegardatransfer.com/	Airport/railway transfer service
http://www.lake-garda-revealed.com/index.html	General info on Lake Garda area
http://www.garda-mtb.com/	Mountain biking hire, guiding, etc
http://www.lagodigardamagazine.com/index.asp?lang=2&menu=10	Information and links to all sports and providers around Lake Garda

All the above is based on my research and is hopefully helpful to those interested in coming along. I am not able to make any personal recommendations or guarantee the costings, mileage, etc but show them to give a guide price for the trip.

Lastly, many thanks to Steve Ratcliffe for sharing his research and knowledge with me, without which producing this meet information sheet would have been much harder.



The Laverado Towers – The Dolomites



Camping Zoo - Arco