

TSC/CLASC in Madesimo, Italy

Trip report by Keith Zimmerman, Trip Leader

Buongiorno! In late January, five intrepid CLASC skiers joined the TSC for a great week in Madesimo, Italy. Madesimo is a small ski village located in the northern tip of Italy just a few miles south of Swiss border. After meeting the TSC in the Milan airport, we hunted down our buses and then began the three hour drive to the resort.



Northern Italy is in love with traffic circles as we must have gone through a dozen during the first hour. After that we drove along the shore of Lake Como and up into the mountains. The final hour was a slow drive up 26 switchbacks to finally reach Madesimo at the top of the valley. Our hotel was literally at the end of the road, Beyond it were just a few homes and then an impassable section of the Alps.



Our first ski day was a cloudy, snowy Sunday, and the slopes were crowded. The ski resort of Valchiavenna is a local's mountain, and lots of families from the Milan region were in town for the weekend. That evening we had a TSC happy hour and the first of our nightly feasts. More on that later. While we were eating, the locals were heading out of town at a steady pace.

Monday morning we awoke to clear blue skies, empty parking lots, and great snow. The hotel staff had told us the weekday population was a fraction of the weekend crowd, but we had to see it to believe it. The slopes were so empty we could ski an entire run and not see another person except for the lift operator at the bottom. We skied right onto the lift almost every time the rest

of the week. The TSC practically had the mountain to ourselves.

Gayle, Dan, and Keith even made it to the back side of the mountain when it was briefly opened for a few hours that day. As we were going down the back slopes we received an automated text saying "Welcome to Switzerland." The three of us also learned the Italian phrase "*Non battuta*" — not groomed — the hard way.



Tuesday most of us took the day off and visited the nearby village of Chiavenna. It was the right call as the winds and visibility on the

mountain were so bad that

day that most of the ski slopes were closed. Down the valley we had great weather for our walking tour of the ancient town. Chiavenna has been there since Roman times and was the gateway to the only two mountain passes that lead into Switzerland.



We saw some beautiful churches and buildings dating from the Middle Ages. Then to finish the day off we went to the nearby winery for tasting of the local grapes. It turns out this was the heart of the Valtellina wine region which is famous for the Nebbiolo grape. We were all amazed at the wide range of tastes they could get out of just one grape varietal. Of course we had to buy some to bring home.

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Wednesday was another blue sky day, and the five of us hit the slopes. Tor and Roslyn had a great day skiing the perfect snow and met up with the rest of us for a club dinner that night. The dinners at our hotel were huge. Every night they gave us an antipasta/salad bar first followed by a pasta buffet with three different pastas and a soup. The third course included three entrees and a side dish, and they finished each night with a selection of three desserts. It's a good thing we were skiing a lot to burn all those calories. Amazingly they didn't repeat a dish the entire week, except for the gelato of course.



Thursday most of the TSC took a day trip to St Moritz. We started with a very early bus ride to get to the train station. From there we took the world famous Bernina Express train up through the high mountain pass and past the glaciers. Visibility was limited because of a light snow fall, but we still enjoyed the amazing views. As we pulled into St Moritz, the clouds broke and blue skies appeared. We spent the afternoon skiing the wide open pistes.



Gayle, Keith, and Dan even took two runs down the course that will be used for the 2017 FIS World Cup Championship. We'll be sure to send our course report to the US ski team. St Moritz is also known for a famous horse polo tournament played on the snow. The arena was already set up on the lake, and we could see them playing while we looked down on the town from the slopes.

Friday was our last day in Madesimo. Some of us went skiing, while others chose to take an Italian cooking class. We learned how to make a pickled fish appetizer, an herb risotto, and tiramisu from scratch. You might get to sample one of those dishes the next time we have a Taste of CLASC event.

Saturday morning we reluctantly departed Madesimo, and all went our separate ways. Some went to Florence for a post trip, while others went to Milan on their own. Everybody agreed that we had a fantastic week at a beautiful hotel and ski resort, and we'll have great memories of our time there.



Ciao!

