

WINTER

Wonderland

Eliza Burnett visits the Grand Hotel Savoia Cortina

There are an untold number of reasons to visit the beautiful village of Cortina d'Ampezzo nestled in an Alpine valley just footsteps away from the awe-inspiring and majestic Dolomites. There is incredible beauty everywhere and nature that literally takes your breath away.

High on the list of attractions is the Grand Hotel Savoia Cortina an internationally-renowned hotel that has been a gateway to the Dolomites for over 100 years. The hotel has always been at the heart of the village.

The Grand Hotel Savoia was born in 1912, when this part of Italy belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, and its fortunes and history have followed that of the town. Cortina has been an adventure sport hub since the 1860s, when mountain climbers started mapping out the Dolomites, and by the turn of the 19th century, it had become a summer holiday rendezvous for British, Austrian, and Germany high society, drawn by the sublime landscape and clean air. Royal society was inevitably followed by Hollywood society as stars Sinatra, Bardot, Hepburn, and Elizabeth Taylor visited and partied in the shadows of the Dolomites.

The hotel opens in June for the Summer season, capturing the best times in Italy from June to October, when the sun works its magic on the surrounding mountains. The Dolomites transform the summer Unesco World Heritage as people switch their ski boots for hiking boots, and their skis for paddle boards to get a closer look at the many turquoise and deep blue lakes. Lake Misurina is only a short drive away, as is Lake Sorapis - known as one of the most magical lakes in the Dolomites, getting its turquoise colour from glacier dust and it is only accessible by either foot or helicopter. The summer sees the hotel transform as they host TED talks, Design Weekends, pet friendly events, yoga days, bespoke events, and on Terrazza 1224 live music sessions, jazz evenings, DJ for cocktail hours, and more.

Among the numerous culinary offerings at the Grand Hotel is the Ristorante Savoy; chic but casual, the menu here is in the hands of Chef Luigi Sarsano, creating an epicurean experience. Chef Luigi has called Cortina his home for 20 years with 14 years spent at the hotel. He always remembers the traditional and cultural practices of cooking and preparing food gained from his upbringing in Southern Italy.

His seasonal menus are infused with French, South Asian and international flavours that reflect his travels in Lisbon, St Moritz, Russia, and Nice. Referencing feedback from guests he creates multi-dimensional dishes that are the cornerstone of Italian cuisine and laced with his other worldly knowledge. Fresh fish from Venice is a favourite among his guests. The menu is accompanied by the very best choice of world wines as well as vintages from small local producers of the area.

The pool area at the hotel and adjoining spa is incredible. A range of treatments are available and the staff are incredibly knowledgeable and welcoming. I spent a wonderfully lazy afternoon reading a book and enjoying the serenity of the pool.

It is however in winter that the hotel comes into its own. There are a bounty of winter skiing and après-ski activities and the region has become a must for the smart-set. The 1956 Winter Olympics were held here in 1956, opened by Sophia Loren, and the two main host cities, Milan and Cortina, will once again welcome back athletes from across the world as it stages the 2026 Winter Olympics.

When I was there skiing in January I promised myself I'd return to enjoy the hotel and all the area has to offer in the summer months – I definitely will. However, I'll also make sure to reserve a room for the 2026 Olympics which the city and hotel I'm sure will host magnificently. 🇮🇹

www.grandhotelsavoia.cortina.it/en/

