

Wanderlust EUROPE

gestalten

The Great European Hike

THE WESTERN BRENTA CIRCUIT

A HUT TOUR OF THE DOLOMITI DI BRENTA

The Brenta Dolomites
ITALY



**ABOUT THE TRAIL**

- DISTANCE 19 km (12 mi)
- DURATION 1 to 2 days
- LEVEL Moderate

Italy's mountainous areas cover such a vast portion of the country that it can be hard to know where to start. Roughly halfway between the Maritime Alps and the big peaks of the Aosta region in the west, and the Eastern Dolomites toward Austria and Slovenia, you'll find the Dolomiti di Brenta—a compact massif west of Trento and the Valle dell'Adige. It may be dwarfed by bigger areas such as Ortles, but this is a fantastic place for hut touring in big mountains.

This is thanks in part to its geography. Like much of the Dolomites, the Brenta range is punctuated by dramatic, soaring towers of rock, and many summits reach the magic 3,000 m (9,843 ft) contour. Although the rock here is mostly dolomite, rather than the limestone of Tre Cime di Lavaredo, this is still a dry landscape of karst formations—rainwater doesn't stay on the surface for long, but soon finds its way underground and often doesn't reappear until several hundred meters downhill.

One such dramatic reappearance takes place at the Cascade Alte (upper falls) near Hotel Vallesinella a few kilometers southeast of the ski resort of Madonna di Campiglio. The Cascade Alte is one of the most impressive waterfalls in the valley, and one of the best walking tours in the Brenta Dolomites passes right next to it.

This route was originally created by British travel writer Gillian Price, a leading English-language expert on walking and traveling in Italy. A resident of Venice, Price has spent years wandering throughout the Dolomites and other parts of the Alps conducting research, and has published over a dozen guidebooks on trekking in Italy. While many of the routes featured in this book are national trails, or have otherwise been on hikers' radars for many years, this is one of the few walks featured that has come to recent prominence thanks to an individual writer. Of course, hikers and climbers have been enjoying the trails that make up the Western Brenta Circuit for a long time, but guidebooks provide context and structure for how we enjoy the mountains.

Although this hike visits no high peaks, it's still compelling. Strong walkers could make it in a day with an early start, but why hurry? Far better to spend the night in a refuge and take your time.

The walk begins at Hotel Vallesinella and climbs through pine forests before breaking out onto a rock-strewn



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THE TRANSCAUCASIAN TRAIL

A NEW LONG-DISTANCE TRAIL IN THE GREATER CAUCASUS

Upper Svaneti
GEORGIA



GOOD TO KNOW

START/FINISH

Chuberi, Georgia
Ushguli, Georgia

TOTAL ELEVATION GAIN

8,383 meters (27,503 ft)

SEASON

June to October. Snow tends to linger above 2,500 m (8,202 ft) until well into July, but the higher passes on the route are generally navigable from mid-June onward. Earlier in the year, ice axe and crampons may be needed.

ACCOMMODATION

Although it's possible to wild camp on this route—a tactic which does add some flexibility to your schedule—accommodation is more plentiful than you might expect. Most villages on the route have a selection of guest houses, and staying locally has benefits: you're putting money into the local economy, you don't have to carry heavy camping gear, you can buy food wherever you stop for the night, and you'll have the privilege of sampling the famously warm Georgian hospitality.

HIGHLIGHTS

1. The Guli Pass
2. Mestia
3. The Adishi Glacier
4. Chkhunderi Pass and its excellent views
5. Arriving in Ushguli

HELPFUL HINTS



WHAT TO BRING

There are no special requirements for this trek—standard walking gear will suffice, including decent footwear and sensible hiking clothing. Trekking poles are recommended due to the steep climbs. Passports and travel documents should be accessible at all times, especially when trekking close to the Russian border.

PLANNING AND NAVIGATION

This hike was newly marked in 2017 with white/red markings and metal signposts. However, the Transcaucasian Trail is still under active development, which means that it's subject to change. Away from the main line of the TCT, it's easy to get lost. Carry a GPS, map, and compass. If in doubt, and especially if you plan any other hikes in the area, consider hiring a guide—they will have crucial local knowledge, and will help you to overcome the language barrier.

SAFETY AND SECURITY

Although hiking in Georgia is generally safe, these are serious mountains, and hikers should have experience with similar trails in Alpine areas. Locals are friendly and generous as a rule, and eager to help travelers, but look after your possessions, as there's always the risk of thieves in remote areas. Do not cross the border with Russia anywhere except for official approved crossing points.

SUPPLIES

Food is available at most of the guest houses along the trail. Most will be happy to prepare you a packed lunch, as well as dinner and breakfast. You won't need to carry more than a day's worth of food at a time.

WATER

Tap water in the villages is safe to drink. There are some mineral springs and fountains, but it's best to purify water from streams.

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BONUS TRACKS

A variant of the trail's last day, from Khalde to Ushguli, heads up to the Lagem Pass at 3,022 m (9,915 ft). This route keeps you in the mountains for longer, but is a demanding one with some exposed ground.

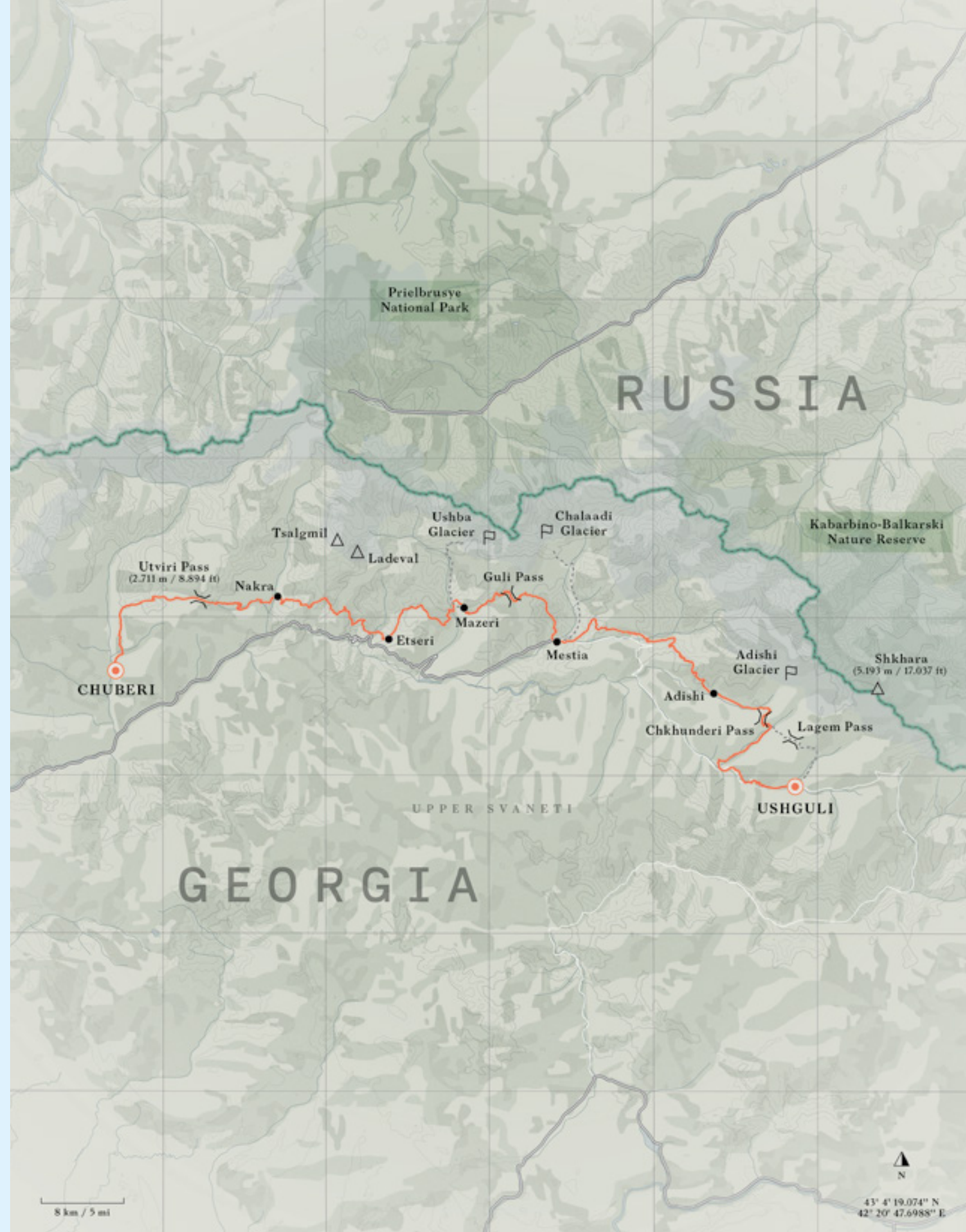
There are two worthwhile day hikes from the TCT. A challenging route from Mazeri leads to the icy wilderness of the Ushba Glacier, and from Mestia it's possible to hike north along the valley of the Mestiachala River to the Chalaadi Glacier.

BACKGROUND

Ushba, a key mountain visible from several points of the TCT through Svaneti, is not one of the highest peaks of the Caucasus, but it is one of the most beautiful, in addition to being one of the most significant in the history of mountaineering in the area. It's regarded as one of the most difficult climbs in the Caucasus. The first ascent of Ushba's north summit was made in 1888 by John Garford Cokkin and mountain guide Ulrich Almer—a Swiss guide who had made his reputation in the Alps and was the son of the celebrated Christian Almer, who made the first ascents of numerous European mountains (including the Eiger).

FLORA & FAUNA

The West Caucasian tur is one of the most unusual animals in the area. It's a species of large mountain goat-antelope endemic to the region, but you might find it tricky to spot one, as they're nocturnal. Quam, quam quia erum ut moluptat liquame nis coraessit ommo quas sum faciur solo vendand ignatemposa dolenis isquati blaccept atemquissum ut quatem quostius versped millut veribus simpora aut ma si deruntibus doluta cumque debis dolo to cuptur?
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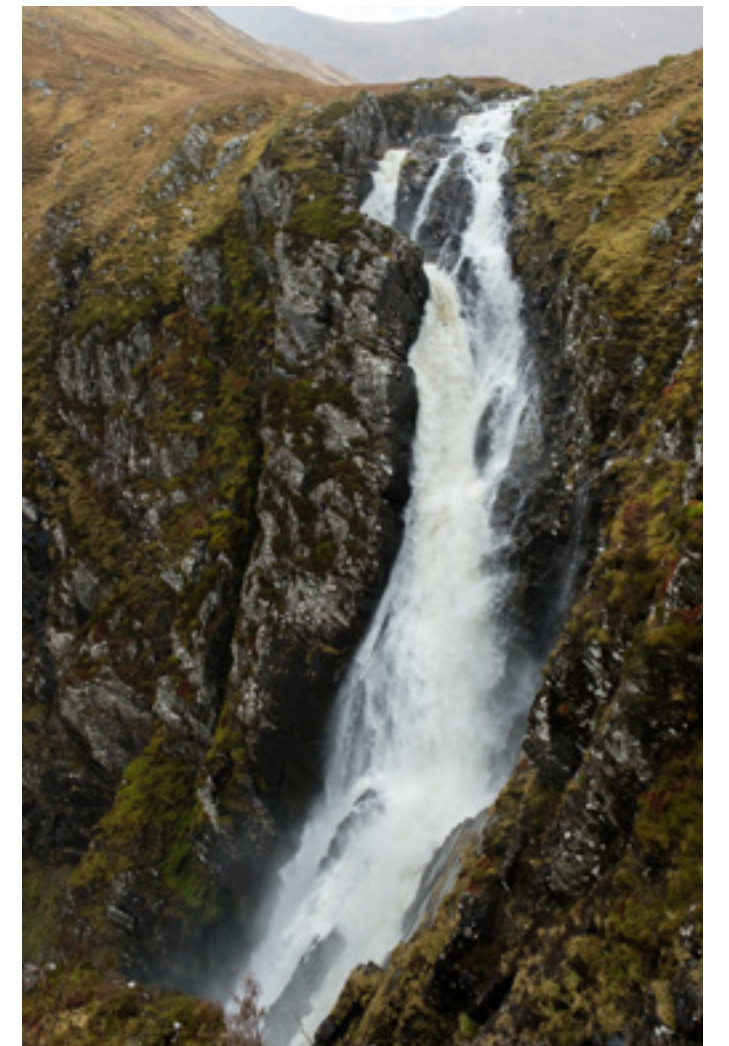
THE CAPE WRATH TRAIL

THE U.K.'S WILDEST LONG-DISTANCE TRAIL

The Highlands
SCOTLAND



“The Cape Wrath Trail can leave a mark, often changing people for the better and spurring them to be more committed to protecting wilderness and nature.”



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ABOUT THE TRAIL

- **DISTANCE** 390 km (242 mi)
- **DURATION** 15 to 20 days
- **LEVEL** Moderate to Hard

Amongst the world’s legendary trails, one stands out as an enigmatic prize, a symbol of remoteness, solitude, and a test of the hiker’s mettle. The Cape Wrath Trail is the U.K.’s toughest long-distance hike, and arguably the best. Stretching for roughly 400 km (249 mi) along the length of the Highlands, this route—which is not quite a trail, as there is often no path underfoot—visits many of Scotland’s wildest and most beautiful locations, from remote glens to secret waterfalls, mountain crags to windswept sandy beaches.

The CWT is not a route for beginners. It’s one to aspire to—something to put on the wish list until the stars align and the time is right. Many hikers develop a lifelong relationship with this trail. It isn’t uncommon to fail on it once or twice before eventually going on to complete it. Such is the Cape Wrath Trail’s quality that

this only increases the feeling of satisfaction when you finally stand at the lighthouse on the northwesternmost tip of the British mainland and stare out across the Atlantic.

As an informal route, there is no single “official” CWT. Hikers are free to invent their own route, though a few variants have emerged as the most popular options. All routes begin at Fort William before striking north, veering through the wildest and most mountainous regions, heading for Cape Wrath. Some variations are harder than others. If you choose to go along the Great Glen instead of through Knoydart, for example, and over the Coulin Pass instead of via Torridon, then the route does become a lot less difficult. However, the more challenging stages are often the best, and for the full CWT experience you’ll need to head away from the easier paths and get to grips with some map-and-compass navigation in a wild and unforgiving mountain landscape.

From Fort William, take the ferry across the loch and walk along easy paths through the Cona Glen before dropping down to Glenfinnan, where you’ll see the famous viaduct (a Harry Potter filming location) and the Jacobite monument. The trail



WANDERLUST EUROPE

The Great European Hike

Editors: gestalten & Alex Roddie
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SAMPLE COVER

Wanderlust Europe explores the continent's most astounding natural landscapes along its most scenic and enchanting trails.

From the temperate climes of the Spanish islands, over the Nordic fjords, and to the summit of Alpine peaks, *Wanderlust Europe* points the reader in the direction of the continent's most awe-inspiring routes. Offering expert knowledge on how best to experience nature's majesty, this stimulating manual for hikers of all skill levels traverses far-reaching locales in pursuit of breathtaking beauty and a sense of freedom. Combining first-hand tips with informative maps and an array of spectacular photography, this book is a welcome addition to the *Wanderlust* series and for anyone with an urge to connect with the great outdoors.

WHAT TO EXPECT

- Informative route-plans alongside practical tips for packing and accommodation for over 50 hikes
- Breathtaking imagery from a selection of leading landscape photographers
- Advice for beginner and seasoned hikers alike, from one-day hikes to longer trips

ALEX RODDIE

has been a mountaineer and climber for over 15 years, and likes to experience nature's wild, and often wet character. Based in England, he works as an editor, writer, and photographer for outdoor-related publications and websites.



The 2020 Wanderlust Europe Book Club

"The proof is in all the hiking and poking corners in the form of an alpine Shangri-la of glacial-carved valleys, sapphire-blue lakes, and serrated granite peaks, it's quite possibly the most scenic multi-week trek in the lower 48 states."



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