

Dotto trains built a global empire on rubber wheels

Posted on March 28, 2026 by Sabina Castelfranco

CASTELFRANCO VENETO — The iconic Dotto mini train returned to the Eastbourne seafront in England on March 28, 2026, kicking off another season on one of Britain's best-loved promenades. It is a small but telling moment for a company born in an Italian workshop more than six decades ago.

From hobby to industry

Dotto Trains, based in Castelfranco Veneto, in the Veneto region of northeastern Italy, has become the world's dominant manufacturer of tourist road trains. The cheerful, locomotive-shaped vehicles ferry visitors through city centres, along seafronts, and up mountain paths, from Verona to Dubai. The story begins in 1962, when founder Ivo Dotto built a rail-based children's train as a personal project. Its popularity was immediate. Within four years he had made the leap that would define the company, replacing fixed tracks with rubber tyres and taking the concept onto open roads.

The business remains family-run. Vice-president Sabrina Carraro says towns and tourist areas represent the strongest market, accounting for two thirds of annual production. "The latter, when they decide to buy, realise soon after that it's a good way to transport people and gives a good return on investment," she said. The company produces 40 to 50 custom-built trains each year, with designs ranging from vintage steam-style carriages to sleek modern vehicles fitted with air conditioning, adapted for climates from northern Europe to the Middle East.

Source: https://italynow.co.uk/dotto-trains-built-a-global-empire-on-rubber-wheels/


Dotto road train in Moena *(Credits: Dotto)*

Going electric

The company's most significant recent push is into zero-emission transport. Its IVO22 model is a fully electric locomotive with improved performance and range, capable of climbing steep routes. The Big Boy model extends this further, designed for high-capacity traffic on narrow or difficult mountain roads. Together, they signal a company repositioning itself not merely as a manufacturer of novelty rides but as a serious player in sustainable urban and tourist mobility.

In Verona, Dotto trains depart from Piazza Bra, the wide square opposite the city's Roman Arena, covering the main landmarks in 35 minutes for five euro per adult. Practical, joyful, and quietly Italian.

Ivo Dotto's founding dream was a train in every city in the world. Sixty-four years on, he is not far off.

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