



The 'Cinque Terre' & Portofino Peninsula

Walking between coloured fishing villages and terraced vineyards



TRIP NOTES 2020

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****GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy****



INTRODUCTION

Liguria is a beautiful coastal region in Northern Italy. It is protected from the northern winds by a continuous protective backbone of high mountains, from the peaks of the Maritime Alps to the Apennines. That's why Liguria is famed for its exceptionally mild weather all year round and why it is the perfect place, despite the uneven terrain, for the flourishing of lush flora including the typical shrubs of the Mediterranean maquis, and also the tall trees that are a typical feature of Alpine flora. It's capital city, Genova 'La Superba', has ruled the Mediterranean for centuries, but for hikers the area is most known because of the stunning Cinque Terre.

The area of the 'Cinque Terre' gets its name from the five picturesque villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore. The area, now a major National Park, is a unique part of Italy. For over a thousand years people have lived in this dramatic landscape, slowly altering its features and cultivating the steep hillsides that lead down to rocky shores. An extensive network of ancient mule tracks – today used as footpaths- take you through an extraordinary landscape of terraces, built by hand with stones and earth.

But the Region of Liguria has more to offer: the nearby small towns of Portovenere, and the wonderful island just in front of it, at the entrance of the 'Gulf of Poets' and the lively Levanto, a charming medieval town with a broad beach.

And of course there is also the famed Peninsula of Portofino, not only known for the colourful Portofino itself, resort for the Italian jet-set, but also for the abbey of San Fruttuoso, located in an isolated inlet of this beautiful coastline, and wonderful Camogli. Walking here is an unforgettable experience!

This tour includes all these highlights: through the extensive footpath network of the area you walk from village to village, between forest and vineyards, through a spectacular terraced landscape overlooking the sea. You have also the time to visit the historic towns of Levanto, Portovenere and of course the five charming villages which make up the 'Cinque Terre', little gems of colourful houses in a green landscape.



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour, suitable for those who have some experience with walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, mostly well waymarked. Elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route notes provided together with the maps. Average walking times: approx.. from 5 to 6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Levanto

Arrival in Levanto. After settling in your hotel there is time for a short visit to the town centre and maybe a swim to wash off the tiredness of the journey.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking time: around 1 hour + sightseeing time

Day 2 – From Levanto along the Coast of Punta Mesco

The first daywalk takes you along the coast to Monterosso al Mare, the first village of the Cinque Terre. The first part of the walk leads up towards Punta Mesco, the most notable promontory in the region. This is a good spot to stop for a picnic lunch. Just short of the point you can make a small detour to the ruins of an old 11th century hermitage and the nearby 'semaforo', from where you will enjoy marvellous views of the rugged coastline. Then you follow a fairly steep path down into Monterosso, a colourful village, with blue, red & yellow houses that cluster behind the beachfront. There is then time to explore the town before taking the local train back to Levanto. For those who want there is also the option to walk back from here, following a more inland forested path, which over the ridge brings you back behind the castle of Levanto.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 9,5 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (4-5 hours with extra option).

Day 3 – To the Coast West of Levanto

From Levanto you walk in western direction today. The first part of the walk goes along the beach, then the path goes up into the first hills and down to the little seaside village of Bonassola. Then it goes through the seaside hills towards the small 'village' of Framura, an aggregation of scattered hamlets on the hillside. From Costa, the highest hamlet, an almost level path contours the hills, with nice views over the sea. A steep descend brings you down to the next resort, Deiva Marina (with the option to continue to Moneglia or even Sestri Levante). This walk along the coast brings you through several charming little villages, where you have the time to drink a coffee or just relax. Also do you have the possibility to have lunch there. From all the villages on the way you can take the train back to Levanto, in case you want to shorten the walk.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 16 km. Approx. walking time: 6 hours.



Day 4 – The “Walk of Love”

You first take the train to Riomaggiore, the most southerly of the five villages, where you can already leave your luggage in the hotel. Then you start the most 'classical' of all walks in the Cinque Terre: the walk along the famous 'Sentiero dell'Amore' ('Lover's Walk') to Manarola, an attractive little village with steep multi-coloured houses overlooking a rocky port. Then head up the 365 steps to Corniglia, perched on a ridge overlooking the sea. From there you continue through terraced vineyards and the occasional citrus grove. As you approach Vernazza,



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dominated by its old fortress, you enjoy some of the best views in the region. You contour around the hillsides following a narrow track that leads us up and down, before a fairly steep descent brings us into the village itself. In Vernazza, arguably the prettiest of all the villages, there is time to ascend the castle tower for a stunning view of the port with its brightly painted boats. There are numerous cafés and bars where you can enjoy refreshment before taking the train back to your hotel.

Accommodation: Riomaggiore - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).

Optional Extra Day

An optional extra walk takes you into the inland of the Cinque Terre, to the churches of Madonna di Reggio and Madonna di Saviore. You first take the train to Vernazza and then walk along the coast to Monterosso, approaching this beautiful little town from the other end. After a coffee break you start climbing up to the sanctuary of Madonna di Saviore. Here you can eat something or relax for a while, before walking on to the sanctuary of Madonna di Reggio. The walk continues more or less along the contour lines; through the hills you walk to the little church of San Bernardo, with beautiful views over the coast, and from there you descend down to the coast at Vernazza again. A shorter option takes you directly from Madonna di Reggio, along a number of little chapels, back down to Vernazza.

Accommodation: Riomaggiore - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 9 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 hours + sightseeing time.

Day 5 – From Riomaggiore to Portovenere

Today you walk in eastern direction. From Riomaggiore, you commence your walk to Campiglia and Portovenere. You hike up a long flight of stairs to the Santuario della Madonna di Montenero. Continuing uphill you begin contouring along the coastal cliffs, through terraced vineyards, enjoying wonderful views of the coastline framed by clear blue waters. You are now on the 'Sentiero Rosso', the ridge-top traverse that goes from one end of the Cinque Terre to the other. You pass through the little hamlet of Campiglia where you can stop for some refreshment. Walking down into the pine forest, the track narrows as you continue towards Portovenere with further spectacular views. Arriving at the 16th century castle above the village, you may be able to see the distant peaks of the Alpi Apuane before a long staircase takes us into the heart of the village. There is time to visit the charming village and Punta San Pietro, before returning to Riomaggiore by boat.

Accommodation: Riomaggiore - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 13 km. Approx. walking time: 5,5 hours + sightseeing time.

Day 6 – Discovering the Peninsula of Portofino

From Riomaggiore you take the train to Camogli, where you leave the luggage in your hotel. Then you start the first walk on the Peninsula of Portofino, towards the beautifully located monastery of San Fruttuoso, dating back to the 11th century and set in its own cove and reachable only by boat or on foot. The walk takes through forested areas, along the church of San Rocco and a number of impressive viewpoints. From San Fruttuoso there is the possibility to walk back or take the boat. In the afternoon take your time to explore the beautiful Camogli itself.

Accommodation: Camogli - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 7,5 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 hours (+ shorter options)

Day 7 – From Santa Margherita to Portofino

You first make a short transfer by train to Santa Margherita, where you have some time to walk around this attractive town. From Santa Margherita, you then walk to Portofino, a resort for the jet set, but apart from that a very attractive colourful village. Do visit its castle and light house, a spectacular viewpoint! If energy permits, you can continue along the trail, with splendid views across the Gulf of Genoa to the Abbey of San Fruttuoso, reaching this 11th century jewel from the other end. You can choose to return by boat to Santa Margherita, or directly to Camogli.

Accommodation: Camogli - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 6 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 hours (+ longer options)

Day 8 – Departure

End of the tour.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic family-run hotels (generally 3/4-star; 5-star on request). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Accommodation is on **B&B** basis, in all accommodations. So no evening meals are included, and you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your accommodation holder can give you good tips. On some occasions you can also choose to eat at the premises of the hotel.

No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you by the accommodation holders, or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you stay. On some occasions you have the option to have your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

Nights 1, 2 & 3: These are spent at Levanto, a nice old medieval city, we stay in a welcoming and comfortable 3 star hotel, centrally located at walking distance from all the main monuments of the medieval town centre.

Nights 4 & 5: These three nights are spent in the lively little village of Riomaggiore, the most eastern of the five villages, with colourful houses and a charming little harbour.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights are spent in beautiful and lively Santa Margherita Ligure, the gate to the Portofino Peninsula, or in the wonderful small harbour town of Camogli, perhaps the most charming place of Liguria.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMODATION:

It is possible to do this tour, staying in more luxurious 4-star hotels. Accommodation in Monterosso – the biggest village of the Cinque Terre - is also available, either to substitute the days in Levanto, or those in Riomaggiore, or both.

INCLUDED

- 3 nights in Levanto*** – BB
- 3 nights in Riomaggiore*** – BB
- 2 nights in Camogli/Santa Margherita Ligure*** – BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale (or better)
- 24/24 h local assistance

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure & city taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Luggage transfer
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of personal nature



LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2-3): Mostly easy walks, on well maintained paths, but with nonetheless some walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On some days extensions or shortcuts are possible.

Fitness: High standard of fitness is not necessary but clients should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in hot sun on dusty or stony tracks.

FOOT PATHS & WAYMARKING

Most paths are relatively well maintained, but during the season some paths can get overgrown (*we are in continuous contact with local authorities to keep the paths clean – please help us by providing you feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: A large part of the route is waymarked (mainly by the parks); elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these it is always possible to find your route.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in LEVANTO. There are frequent trains from all directions. In case you want to come with your own car: there is the possibility to park your car here.

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast on day 9 in Camogli. The return is most easily made by train. Back to Levanto is 30 minutes by train.

N.B. Please note that there is no (cheap) parking space anywhere on the Cinque Terre except for Levanto!

TOUR VARIATIONS

We usually recommend to stay 5 nights in total (3 nights in Levanto + 2 in Riomaggiore) to be able to do all the most interesting walks with ease. However, it is possible to condense some of the walks, reducing the number of nights on the Cinque Terre. It is also possible to opt for only one accommodation on the Cinque Terre, instead of two (Levanto & Riomaggiore). This one accommodation can either be Levanto, Monterosso or Riomaggiore. Many fine hotels are available. Prices on request.

The very frequent trains, which link all the villages, make it easy to modify the programme. It gives you all the freedom to do the walks in your own rhythm, or alternatively, do some sightseeing.

The Peninsula of Portofino offers many walking options. At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also an opportunity to visit Genova and/or Pisa / Florence, or spend some time on the beach, somewhere in Liguria. The tour can easily be extended with a few days in Pisa or Florence. It is also possible to change the itinerary: first the Portofino Peninsula, followed by the Cinque Terre journey.

It is also possible to include some extra nights in your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'. Extra walking or sightseeing options will be provided !!!

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