



Independent walking tour (CIN2/CIN2A)

The Best of the Cinque Terre

Walking between coloured fishing villages and terraced vineyards



TRIP NOTES 2024

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INTRODUCTION

This is a tour which in only a few days shows you the best walks of the Cinque Terre. You'll walk through the extensive footpath network of the area from village to village, between forest and vineyards, through a spectacular terraced landscape overlooking the sea. You will of course visit the five charming villages which make up the 'Cinque Terre', little gems of colourful houses in a green landscape, but you'll also have the time to visit the beautiful historic towns of Levanto and Portovenere.

The 'Cinque Terre' gets its name from the five picturesque villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore. The area, now a 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 – takes you through an extraordinary landscape of terraces, built by hand with stones and earth.

During this tour you'll do all the best walks: from Levanto you walk along the coast to the headland of Punta Mesco, the most notable promontory in the region, with beautiful views over the sea. It will also give you the first glance of the Cinque Terre, with the option to walk down to the first village, Monterosso al Mare. Of course, you do the most 'classic' of all walks in the Cinque Terre: the walk along the coast touching all five villages: Riomaggiore, Manarola, an attractive little village with steep multicoloured houses overlooking a rocky port, Corniglia, perched on a ridge overlooking the sea, and Vernazza, arguably the prettiest of all the villages. From there can you continue through terraced vineyards and nice woodlands to Monterosso al Mare again, approaching it from the other side.

But the area has more to offer: on the last day you'll walk to the small town of Portovenere, with a wonderful island just in front of it at the entrance to the 'Gulf of Poets'.

Of course, you'll have the time to explore lively Levanto, a charming medieval town with a broad beach, where you'll stay during the first days of your tour. Levanto is a lively little town with a good beach and a charming medieval centre. As the town doesn't live from tourism only, also out of season there is still some 'local life', with bars and restaurants open. Upon request you can then either move to one of the villages on the Cinque Terre coast or travel by train to the start of the walks.

An optional extra daywalk can bring you along the sanctuaries higher up in the mountains, with great views on the villages down at the seaside. And, in case you want to spend an extra night in Portovenere you can explore not only the town itself, but also the islands at the entrance of the romantic 'Gulf of Poets'!



Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, parts of them are waymarked. Average walking times: from approx. 5 to 6 hours each day.



DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Levanto

Arrival in Levanto. After settling in at your hotel there is time for a short visit to the town centre and maybe a swim to wash off the weariness of the journey. In case you already arrive in the morning you could opt to do the relatively short walk to Monterosso already.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking time: around 1 h. + sightseeing time

Day 2 – From Levanto along the Cape of Punta Mesco

The first day walk takes you along the coast to Monterosso al Mare. 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 at for a picnic lunch. Just short of the headland you can make a small detour to the ruins of an old 11th-century hermitage and the nearby 'semaforo', 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 feel like it there is also the option of walking back from here, following a more inland forested path, which brings you back over the ridge behind the castle of Levanto.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 5 km. Approx. walking time: 3 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 350 m.

To the Coast West of Levanto (optional)

Today you walk in a western direction. The first part of the walk goes along the beach, then the path goes up into the nearby hills and down to the little seaside village of Bonassola. Through the seaside hills you then walk towards the small 'village' of Framura, an aggregation of scattered hamlets. From Costa, the highest hamlet, an almost level path contours the hillside, with nice views over the sea. A steep descent brings you down to the next resort, Deiva Marina (with the option of continuing to Moneglia or even Sestri Levante). This walk along the coast brings you through several charming little villages, where you have the time to grab a coffee or just relax. You'll get the chance to have lunch there as well. You can take the train back to Levanto from any of the villages on the way, in case you want to shorten the walk.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 16 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 700 m.



Day 3 – The “Sentiero dell’Amore” & the Cinque Terre coastal path

A short train ride brings you to Riomaggiore, from where you start the most 'classic' of all walks in the Cinque Terre: the coastal walk which touches all 5 villages. First you'll walk a short stretch of the famous 'Sentiero dell'Amore' ('Lover's Walk'), then you climb over the hill to Manarola, an attractive little village with steep multicoloured houses overlooking a rocky harbour. Then head up the steps to the charming hilltop village of Volastra, where you have the time for a



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drink, before embarking on the stunning walk through the terraced vineyards to the village of Corniglia, perched on a ridge overlooking the sea. From here you continue through terraced vineyards and the occasional citrus grove to Vernazza. As you approach Vernazza, dominated by its old fortress, you enjoy some of the best views in the region, before a fairly steep descent brings you into the village itself. In Vernazza, arguably the prettiest of all the villages, you can climb the castle tower for a stunning view of the port with its brightly painted boats, and there are numerous cafés and bars where you can enjoy a drink before taking the train back to Levanto.

(N.B. If you do the short 5-day tour we recommend to continue the walk to Monterosso).

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 6 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 450 m. (longer options available)

The Sanctuaries of Madonna di Reggio and Soviore (optional)

Today's walk takes you into the inland of the Cinque Terre, to the churches of Madonna di Reggio and Madonna di Soviore. You first take the train to Vernazza and then walk along the coast to Monterosso, approaching this beautiful little town from the other side. After a coffee break you start climbing up to the sanctuary of Madonna di Soviore. Here you can have something to eat or relax for a while, before walking on to the next sanctuary, that of Madonna di Reggio. Then the walk continues more or less along the contour lines; you walk through the hills 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, past a number of little chapels, back down to Vernazza.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 9 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 550 m.

Day 4 – From Riomaggiore to Portovenere

From Riomaggiore you walk in eastern direction today, heading for Portovenere. You hike up a long flight of steps to the Santuario della Madonna di Montenero. Continuing uphill you begin walking 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 refreshments. The track narrows as you continue walking down into the pine forest 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 flight of steps takes you into the heart of the village. There is plenty of time to visit the charming village and Punta San Pietro, before settling in your hotel.

Accommodation: Portovenere - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 13 km. Approx. walking time: 5,5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 650 m.

Roundwalk over the Island of Palmaria (optional)

After the long walk yesterday, today you'll have some time to recover. There is a beautiful, easy roundwalk over the island of Palmaria, just across the bay from Portovenere. By boat you make the short crossing and then you'll have the whole day to discover the beauty of this very Mediterranean island, immersed in the dense vegetation, overlooking the cliffs with just the seagulls and azure sky above you. Take some time to explore the impressive fortresses and perhaps go for a swim on one of the remote beaches. Upon returning by boat to the mainland you still have time to visit the charming village of Portovenere itself and choose the restaurant for your final supper in the harbour of Venus.

Accommodation: Portovenere - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 5-6 km. Approx. walking time: around 3 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 300 m.

Day 5 – Departure

End of the tour.



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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.

All accommodations are on **B&B** basis. No evening meals are included so you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area for your dinner. 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'll be staying. On some occasions you have the option to have your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMODATION:

It is possible to do this tour, staying in more luxurious 4-star hotels. On request accommodation in Monterosso is also possible.

INCLUDED

- 3 (5) nights in Hotel*** in Levanto - BB
- 1 (2) nights in Hotel*** in Portovenere - BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale
- GPS tracks for each day
- Luggage transfer on day 4 (day 6)
- 24/7 h local assistance

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure & city taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- 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 relatively easy walks, on well-maintained paths, though some include uphill walking (with flights of steps), sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On most days extensions or shortcuts are possible.

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



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FOOTPATHS & WAYMARKING

Footpaths: 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 your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

Waymarking: A large part of the route is waymarked (mainly by the parks); elsewhere you need to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these you will always be able to find your route.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival: The tour starts in LEVANTO. There are frequent trains from all directions. Also from the nearest airports, at Genova and Pisa. In case you come by car, you are allowed to park a car here (about € 15/day).

Departure: The tour ends after breakfast in PORTOVENERE on day 5 (8). There are many buses to Spezia, the main train station. The return to Levanto is most easily made by boat.

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



TOUR VARIATIONS

SHORTER & LONGER VERSIONS

Longer and shorter versions of this tour are available. And check out our other Cinque Terre tours as well!

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

The shorter 5-day version of this programme shows you some of the best walks, but to fully appreciate the Cinque Terre we would recommend the 8-day tour, which includes all the extra, less known walks!

It is possible to include some extra nights in your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'.

If you book the optional extension you can also discover the beautiful peninsula of Portofino, not only known for the colourful Portofino itself, resort for the Italian *jetset*, but also for the abbey of San Fruttuoso, located in an isolated inlet of this beautiful coastline, and the wonderful little towns of Camogli and Santa Margherita Ligure. Walking here is an unforgettable experience!



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The tour can easily be extended with a few days in Genova, Pisa/Lucca or Florence. Several good accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

OTHER CINQUE TERRE TOURS

A longer, 8-day version of this tour -with a stay also higher up in the hills- is also available: The Cinque Terre & Portovenere – a tour on which you will fully enjoy the different sides of the Cinque Terre and literally do all walks!

There are several tours which include two days on the **Portofino Peninsula**, an area where you can make some stunning walks, less crowded than the trails in the Cinque Terre. You could opt for a tour with only the Cinque Terre & the Portofino Peninsula, or a complete tour with the Cinque Terre, Portovenere & the Portofino Peninsula.

Of course, for those who fly in to the nearby airport of **Pisa**, a few days in Pisa – and perhaps close by Lucca – are strongly recommended. As well the **Genova**, the capital town of the Region, birthplace of Columbus, and one of the most important merchant towns in medieval Italy, is well worth a visit for its amazing historical centre!



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