



Cinque Terre, Portovenere & the 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 – which today can be used as footpaths – takes you through an extraordinary landscape of terraces, built by hand with stones and earth.

But the region of Liguria has more to offer: the small towns of Portovenere, with a wonderful island just in front of it at the entrance to the 'Gulf of Poets', and the lively Levanto, a charming medieval town with a broad beach, both nearby. Of course there is also the famed Peninsula of Portofino, known not only for the colourful Portofino itself, the resort for the Italian jetset, but also for the abbey of San Fruttuoso, located in an isolated inlet of this beautiful coastline, and wonderful Camogli, the city of the 1000 sailing ships. 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, beautiful Camogli, Santa Margherita Ligure and picturesque Portofino. 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 (or Monterosso or Riomaggiore). 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.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel * BB**

Total walking time: around 1 hour + sightseeing time

Day 2 – From Levanto along the Coast of Punta Mesco

The first day walk takes you from the centre of Levanto, 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 * BB**

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

Day 3 – The “Walk of Love”

You first take the train to Riomaggiore, the most southerly of the five villages. From there you start the most 'classical' of all walks in the Cinque Terre: the coastal path linking all five villages together. First you walk a short stretch along the famous 'Sentiero dell'Amore' ('Lover's Walk'). Then you head for Manarola, an attractive little village with steep multi-coloured houses overlooking a rocky port. From here you hike up to the rural hamlet of Volastra, before descending back to Corniglia, perched on a ridge overlooking the sea, in the midst of stunning terraced vineyards, with awesome views over the whole area. Take your time to look around in Corniglia and then continue through terraced vineyards and the occasional citrus grove. As you approach Vernazza, 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: Levanto - Hotel * BB**

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

Day 4 – From Riomaggiore to Portovenere

Today you walk in eastern direction. From Riomaggiore, you commence your walk to Campiglia and Portovenere. You first hike up a long flight of stairs to the Santuario della Madonna di Montenero (optional bus). 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 settling in your hotel overlooking the Gulf of the Poets.

Accommodation: Portovenere – Hotel * BB**

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



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Day 5 – Roundwalk over the Island of Palmaria

After the longer walk yesterday, today you'll have some time to recover. There is the possibility of making an 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 discover the impressive fortresses too 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 * BB**

Total walking distance: 5-6 km. Approx. walking time: 3 hours + sightseeing time.

Day 6 – Discovering the Peninsula of Portofino

Today you take the train from the Cinque Terre to Camogli. First you leave your luggage at the hotel there and then you start the walk onto the Peninsula of Portofino, towards the beautifully located monastery of San Fruttuoso, which dates back to the 11th century and is set in its own cove, reached only by boat or on foot. The walk takes you through forested areas, past the church of San Rocco and a number of impressive viewpoints. From San Fruttuoso you could walk back or take the boat. In the afternoon take your time to explore the beautiful Camogli itself.

Accommodation: Camogli - Hotel * BB**

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

Day 7 – From Santa Margherita to Portofino

First you make a short transfer by train to Santa Margherita, where you have a bit of time to walk around this attractive town. Then you walk to Portofino, a resort for the jet set, but also a very attractive and colourful village in its own right. Do visit its castle and lighthouse, a spectacular viewpoint! Energy permitting, you can continue along the trail, with splendid views across the Gulf of Genoa to the Abbey of San Fruttuoso, approaching this 11th-century jewel from the other side. You can choose to return by boat to Santa Margherita, or directly to Camogli.

Accommodation: Camogli - Hotel * BB**

Total walking time: around 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).

Day 8 – Departure

End of the tour



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic family-run hotels (generally 3-star; 4-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.

Nights 1, 2 & 3: These nights are spent at Levanto, Monterosso or Riomaggiore (according to your choice).

Nights 4 & 5: These two nights are spent in the beautiful fishing village of Portovenere in the Gulf of the Poets, in a comfortable hotel overlooking the bay and the island of Palmaria.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights are spent in the wonderful little harbour town of Camogli or in Santa Margherita Ligure, the gateway to the Portofino Peninsula.

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMODATION:

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

INCLUDED

- 3 nights in Levanto*** - BB
- 2 nights in Portovenere*** - BB
- 2 nights in Camogli*** - BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale (or more detailed)
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transfer

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure 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 easy walks, on well maintained paths, though some include uphill walking, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On some 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.

FOOTPATHS & 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 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/RIOMAGGIORE. There are frequent trains from all directions.

Departure: The tour ends in CAMOGLI on day 8. The return (to Levanto) is most easily made by train.

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

TOUR VARIATIONS

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

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.

Therefore you can also opt for two accommodations (Levanto & Riomaggiore) on the Cinque Terre, instead of **just one**, in either Levanto, Monterosso or Riomaggiore.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also an opportunity to visit Genoa 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. Several good accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

It is also possible to change the itinerary of this tour doing the first two days in Camogli (Portofino Peninsula), followed by the Cinque Terre journey.

Longer and shorter versions of this tour are available. Prices on request. Check out our other Cinque Terre tours!

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