



Pisa, Cinque Terre, Portovenere & the Portofino Peninsula

walking between coloured fishing villages and terraced vineyards



TRIP NOTES 2021

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GENIUS LOCI TRAVEL - The Real Spirit Of Italy



INTRODUCTION

This unique tour also gives you the possibility to visit the Cinque Terre, Pisa and the amazing Portofino Peninsula in just a week-long trip. The tour starts from the famous city of Pisa, known worldwide for its Leaning Tower (the bell tower of the city's cathedral). But the city is also home to the University of Pisa, which has a history going back to the 12th century and boasts more than 20 other historic churches, several beautiful historic palaces and various bridges across the River Arno. From here you can also pay an optional visit to the city of Lucca, considered one of the most charming in Tuscany.

Then you travel into the region of Liguria, 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 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 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, 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. Walking here is an unforgettable experience! 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, well waymarked. Average walking times: approx from 5 to 6 hours each day.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 1 – Arrival in Pisa

Arrival in Pisa. After settling in at your hotel there is perhaps some time for a quick visit to the town centre and maybe a swim to wash off the weariness from the journey. In the evening you can go out for dinner in a nice restaurant nearby.

Accommodation: Pisa, Hotel * BB**

Total walking time: around 1 h. + sightseeing time

Optional Extra Day: Pisa & Lucca

You start a beautiful roundwalk through the old town centre of Pisa straight from your hotel. The walk ultimately brings you to the train station, where you make a short ride to the nearby town of Lucca, one of Tuscany's most charming towns with much to see, ranging from the Roman amphitheatre (now the town square), to amazing Renaissance architecture. First you walk through Piazza Risorgimento and then make your way into the heart of this stunning walled town. Few cars are allowed in the old town centre so it's a pleasure to explore the maze of old streets and alleyways without needing to dodge the traffic! Take your time to wander towards the centre and perhaps to climb to the top of Torre Guinigi, a tall tower attached to a medieval villa, for a splendid view of the ancient tiled rooftops. Towards the end of the afternoon you travel back by train to Pisa. This is the perfect time to visit the Piazza dei Miracoli, with its famous leaning tower, as most of the crowds have gone. A stroll through the old centre, with maybe a stop for a drink, brings you back to your hotel.

Accommodation: Pisa, Hotel * BB**

Total walking time: around 1 h. + sightseeing time

Day 2 – From Levanto along the Cape of Punta Mesco to Monterosso

Today is the first walking day on the Cinque Terre. You travel by train from Pisa to Levanto (or Monterosso or Riomaggiore). After settling in at your hotel there is time to make a short visit to the town centre and buy your picnic supplies. Then you start your first day walk, which 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 * BB**

Total walking time: around 3,5 h. + sightseeing time (4-5 h. with extra option).



Day 3 – The "Walk of Love"

From Riomaggiore, the southernmost of the five villages, you walk the most 'classic' of all the footpaths 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, 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 you up and down, before a fairly steep descent brings you into the village itself. In Vernazza, arguably the prettiest of all the villages, there is time to climb the castle tower for a stunning view of the port with its brightly painted boats. There are numerous cafés & bars where you can enjoy refreshments before taking the train back home.

Accommodation: Levanto, Hotel * BB**

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

Day 6 – From Riomaggiore to Portovenere

Today you walk in an eastern direction. From Riomaggiore, you begin your walk to Campiglia and Portovenere. You first hike up a long flight of steps to the Santuario della Madonna di Montenero (optional bus). 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. The views here are amazing: you might be able to see Corsica as well as the distant peaks of the Alpi Apuane. You pass through the little hamlet of Campiglia where you can stop for some refreshments. 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 flight of steps takes you into the heart of the village. There is time to visit the charming village and Punta San Pietro, before taking the boat back for your last dinner & final night on the Cinque Terre.

Accommodation: Levanto, Hotel * BB**

Total walking time: around 5 h. + sightseeing time (6 h. with extra option).

Day 5 – 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 time: around 3,5 h. + sightseeing time (shorter option: 1,5 – 2,5 h.).

Day 6 – 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, long 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 7 – 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 of having your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

Night 1: The first night is spent in Pisa, easily reached by train or by air (many low-cost flights). Here you stay in a comfortable 3-star hotel in the old town centre, centrally located, at walking distance from the train station, all the main monuments of the medieval town centre and close to many nice restaurants.

Nights 2, 3 & 4: These three nights are spent in Levanto or Riomaggiore. Levanto is a nice old medieval town. Here you stay in a welcoming and comfortable 3-star hotel, centrally located, at walking distance from all the main monuments of the medieval town centre. Riomaggiore, the easternmost of the five villages, is a lively little village of colourful houses with a charming little harbour. You would stay in a centrally located hotel here as well.

Nights 5 & 6 : The last two nights are spent in the wonderful little town of Camogli, perhaps the most charming place in Liguria. Alternatively you can stay 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 of the Cinque Terre – is also available, either instead of the days in Levanto, or those in Riomaggiore.

INCLUDED

- 1 night in Pisa*** - BB
- 3 nights in Levanto*** - BB
- 2 nights in Camogli*** - BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale
- 24/7 assistance

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



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LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

Moderately easy (2-3): Mostly easy walks, on well maintained paths, though some include 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 you should be able to walk for up to 5 hours a day in 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 have 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 PISA. There are many low-cost flights from all over Europe, as well as frequent trains from all directions.

Departure: The tour ends in CAMOGLI. The return to Pisa is most easily made by train. This takes about 1,5 h.

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 it is also possible to opt for two Cinque Terre accommodations (Levanto & Riomaggiore), 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 Lucca & Florence (from Pisa), or spend some time on the beach somewhere in Liguria. The tour can easily be extended with a few days in Pisa, Genoa or Florence. Several good accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

It is also possible to change the itinerary of this tour (depending also on your travel schedule): the day in Pisa can come at the end of the tour instead of at the beginning. It is also possible to do the two days in Camogli (Portofino Peninsula) before the days on the Cinque Terre.

Longer and shorter versions of this tour are also available. Prices on request.

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