



Independent walking tour (CIN3)

The 'Cinque Terre' & Portofino Peninsula

Walking between coloured fishing villages and terraced vineyards



TRIP NOTES

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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 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. In alternative you could book an extra night in Levanto.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

Total walking time: around 1 h. + sightseeing time

Optional Extra Day: From Levanto along the Cape of Punta Mesco

The first day walk takes you along the coast to Monterosso al Mare, the most western village of the 5 making up 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 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.

Day 2 – To the Coast West of Levanto

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, have lunch or just relax. 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



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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 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)

Optional Extra Day: The Sanctuaries of the Madonna di Saviore & Reggio

You hike inland to the churches of Madonna di Reggio and Madonna di Saviore. By train you reach Vernazza and then walk along the coast to Monterosso. After a coffee break you climb up to the sanctuary of Madonna di Saviore. Here you can eat something or relax, 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: 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 first have to hike up a long flight of steps (optional bus) 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 returning to Levanto by boat.

Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel ***

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

Day 5 – Discovering the Peninsula of Portofino

From Levanto you take the train to the beautiful small town of Camogli (or in alternative to Santa Margherita Ligure), 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 colourful streets of beautiful Camogli itself.

Accommodation: Camogli / Santa Margherita Ligure - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 7,5 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 550 m.



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Day 6 – 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 / Santa Margherita Ligure - Hotel ***

Total walking distance: 6 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 h. Ascent & descent: + 250/650 m./ - 250/650 m.

Day 7 – Departure

End of the tour.



TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

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

UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMODATION:

It is possible to do this tour, staying in more luxurious 4-star hotels. On request accommodation in Monterosso – the biggest village of the Cinque Terre - is also available.



INCLUDED

- 4 (5) nights in Hotel*** in Levanto – BB
- 2 nights in Hotel*** in Camogli/Santa Margherita Ligure – BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale (or better)
- GPS tracks for each day
- 24/7 h local assistance

NOT INCLUDED

- Departure & city taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Tourist tax
- 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.

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 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 7 in CAMOGLI/SANTA MARGHERITA LIGURE. The return is most easily made by train. Back to Levanto is 30 minutes by train.

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