

NEW

ITALY: LIGURIA

Cinque Terre & Ligurian Riviera

Hotel-to-hotel   independent walking

- Arguably the finest hiking in Europe: dramatic stepped cliffs, terraced coastal paths, panoramic Apennine views
- Chic Portofino, charming Portovenere, palm-fringed Levante, world-famous Cinque Terre
- Emerald seas, hidden coves, secluded bays backed by golden-sand beaches
- Excellent network of coastal trains/ ferries/ cable cars to shorten or extend routes as you fancy
- Picturesque harbours, thriving marinas, beautifully romantic pastel-coloured villages



New for 2011, this exceptional 10-night independent walking holiday is the perfect introduction to Liguria's stunning coast. During your stay, you'll explore the Riviera's most precious jewels, from exclusive Portofino - a favourite haunt of the rich and famous - to the picturesque mediaeval harbour of Portovenere, and spend time hiking the stepped cliffs of the stunning Cinque Terre, a UNESCO world heritage site for centuries praised by artists and poets.

In the main, your walks follow the web of spectacular coastal paths and cultivated terraces that intricately connect the tiny fishing villages and historic ports. You'll pass through ancient wooded trails of oak and chestnut forest, and traverse ridges with spectacular views of the Apennine peaks - in some places you can even see as far as Corsica on a clear day. We've designed the walks so that they each end in quaint colourful harbours (great people-watching opportunities!) and the presence of regular ferries/ water taxis and unique coastal trains allow you flexibility on most days.

Liguria also know for its mouthwatering cuisine, a subtle blend of fresh ingredients from land and sea, and is reputed to produce the healthiest cuisine in Italy. Try oven-baked *focaccia* with anchovies and capers dipped in *pesto alla Genovese*, with tender green basil leaves, crunchy pine nuts and pecorino cheese!

Where you'll stay is special too, each with its unique style and character: an elegant 1920's Liberty style villa in Rapallo; a lovely family-run hotel in Levante (homemade cakes for breakfast in the flower garden!), and a converted C17 Franciscan convent, with panoramic dining terrace, in Portovenere.



CINQUE TERRE & LIGURIAN RIVIERA | DAY BY DAY

Saturday Arrive in Rapallo

We meet you at Genoa airport and transfer you (45mins) to the coastal town of Rapallo.

Sunday Ruta di Camogli to Portofino 10km/6.5mi/6hr

A short bus ride takes you to Ruta di Camogli, the start of today's walk. You walk along ancient forest trails through the lush Natural Park of Monte Portofino before descending to the secluded bay of San Fruttuoso, home to its C11 Benedictine abbey. End your day in chic Portofino, the Riviera's most exclusive resort, before a ferry takes you back to Rapallo.

Monday Rapallo to Chiavari 12.5km/8mi/4hr

A breathtaking cable car ride takes you up to the impressive C16 sanctuary of Montallegro, where you can enjoy magnificent vistas down to Rapallo. From here you follow a ridge path to Chiavari, accompanied by 360° views across the jagged Ligurian Apennines.

Tuesday Chiavari to Levanto (By train)

A short train journey (25mins) takes you to palm-fringed Levanto, a town of old-world charm and known to have the best beach on the Riviera. We suggest stopping en route in Sestri Levante, an ancient merchant and maritime centre, packed with pastel-coloured fisherman's houses and endowed with a lovely curving peninsula and two sweeping bays.

Wednesday At Levanto 12.5km/8mi/4.5hr

A circular route from the hotel ascends on mule tracks and woodland trails into the terraced hillsides that form the backdrop to the Ligurian coastline. You steadily work your way up to a ridge before meandering along the crest with spectacular views plunging all the way down to the sea. You finally descend through tiny hamlets, maybe stopping for an ice cream in Montale on the way down!

Thursday Levanto to Monterosso 7km/5mi/3hr

A classical coastal route across sea-facing terraces and into the woodland and *maquis* on the steep bluffs of the rugged promontory of Punta Mesco, this is a good spot for a picnic lunch. From the headland you have wonderful views of the entire coastline before a fairly steep path takes you down to Monterosso, a colourful village, with blue, red and yellow houses that cluster behind the beachfront. This is the first of five villages along the Cinque Terre.

Friday At Monterosso 3.5km/2mi/2hr

A 5-minute train ride takes you to Vernazza – the second village and only natural port of the Cinque Terre. With its typical tower-shaped houses and architecturally elaborate buildings decorated with portals and porticos, a reminder of the prosperity the village once enjoyed under Genoese domination. From here the narrow footpath ascends through cultivated vineyards and olive groves to gain spectacular views as far as Corsica on a clear day, before a steep descent takes you down to Monterosso.

Saturday Riomaggiore to Vernazza/Monterosso 7km/5mi/3.5hr

A 10-min train ride to the last village of the Cinque Terre - Riomaggiore, the start of today's walk. You set off on the most famous path of all the *Via dell'Amore* that leads you right in to the pretty marina of Manarola. From here your route takes you via narrow herb-scented paths to Corniglia, a village perched high on the promontory and a great lunch spot. Finally you'll follow a series of lovely bridges to Vernazza. A chilled wine by the port perhaps before popping back on the train to Monterosso.

Sunday Riomaggiore to Portovenere 12.5km/8mi/6hr

Your route continues south today to the charming fishing port of Portovenere. Set in a beautiful sweeping bay (great swimming), and once the haunt of Byron and Shelley, it boasts an impressive 16C castle and several mediaeval churches.

Monday The Island of Palmaria 4.5km/3mi/2.5hr

A small water taxi takes you to the nearby island of Palmaria, now a nature reserve. Here you follow a circular path around the island where you're rewarded with spectacular views of the Gulf of Poets and nearby islands. After a picnic you head back to Portovenere for a relaxed afternoon.

Tuesday Leave Portovenere

We take you to Pisa airport for your flight home.

WHERE YOU STAY



Hotel Canali

★★★★

Rapallo, Days 1+2



Monte Rosa Hotel

★★★

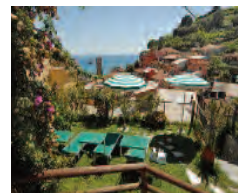
Chiavari, Day 3



Hotel Nazionale

★★★

Levano, Days 4+5



Degli Amici

★★★

Monterosso, Days 6+7+8



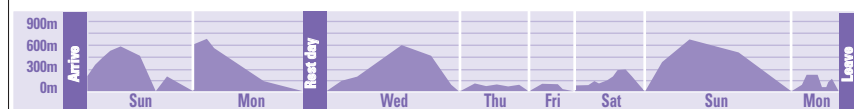
Grand Hotel Portovenere

★★★★

Portovenere, Days 9+10

For extra nights we recommend Portovenere, and city add-ons can be arranged in Pisa.

CINQUE TERRE & LIGURIAN RIVIERA | WALKING DETAILS



The walking is mainly on mule tracks, stone steps and narrow coastal paths, with fairly steep ascents and long descents to sea level. Vertigo sufferers and walkers with knee problems may have difficulty with certain sections. Walkers should be fit and sure footed. Walking boots are essential and walking poles are recommended.

