



The Cinque Terre

Guaranteed departure dates for 2010:
Every day during the periods: 02 February - 16 July; 16 August - 15 November;

Ref. number:
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Introduction

Enter the magical land of the Cinque Terre, five unique fishing villages along the Ligurian coast, known as Italy's 'flower-Riviera'. Built into the sheer rocky coast, they are famed for their rugged scenery and are best reached by train or foot, as car access is limited. The Cinque Terre is National Park and UNESCO heritage listed site 1997. Walking along the coastal footpaths offers striking views of lush Mediterranean vineyards and wild flowers abound, while further inland there are tantalizing pine and chestnut forests. Travel by train or boat from Monterosso to picturesque villages where you can savor the delicious local cuisine and relax with a glass of white wine in an outdoor café overlooking the emerald blue waters of the Mediterranean sea. The Cinque Terre is a small paradise with unique landscape with winding paths, enchanting beaches between cliffs, clear waters, and amazing aromas, sure to please the palette of every visitor.

Special highlights:

- The illustrious five villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, Riomaggiore Levanto & Bonassol
- Breathtaking views of the emerald blue Mediterranean Sea
- Steep terraced hills of olive groves, vineyards and lemon trees

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- Outstandingly delicious sea food and the famous Trofie al Pesto
- Fabulous beaches for swimming

Itinerary:

Day 1: Arrival in Levanto. After settling in your hotel there is time for a short visit to the town centre and maybe a swim to wash off the tiredness of the journey.

/breakfast/

** Reaching Cinque Terre:*

Getting to Cinque Terre is easy and best done by train. For the most part the roads are narrow and dangerous and parking is practically non-existent. Besides getting around by train is simple and cheap. Cinque Terre is on the Genova - La Spezia line and trains run frequently during the time visitors would want to be there. Arriving from outside the area train into Genova and then look for trains heading to LaSpezia. There are many towns which dot the coastline so make sure the town where you want to stop is on the board for that run. From Genova, the train ride should take between 1 and 2 hours depending how many stops are made. From the south, do the same from LaSpezia. Cinque Terre is very close to LaSpezia so the ride is not very long at all. Timetables can be found at Trenitalia.com

Day 2: Riomaggiore to Monterosso

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 for a picnic lunch. Just short of the point you can make a small detour to the ruins of an old 11th century hermitage and the nearby 'semaforo', from 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 want there is also the option to walk back from here, following a more inland forested path, which over the ridge brings us back behind the castle of Levanto. *Total walking time: around 3,5hours + sightseeing time (4-5hours with extra option).*

/breakfast/

Day 3: Riomaggiore to Vernazza

Take the train to Riomaggiore, the most southerly of the five villages, where you can already leave your luggage in the hotel. Then you start

the most 'classical' of all walks 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 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. *Total walking time: around 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).*

/breakfast/

Day 4: Riomaggiore to Madonna di Reggio

Today's walk takes you into the inland of the Cinque Terre, to the churches of Madonna di Reggio and Madonna di Saviore. You first take the train to Vernazza and then walk along the coast to Monterosso, approaching this beautiful little town from the other end. After a coffee break you start climbing up to the sanctuary of Madonna di Saviore. Here you can eat something 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; 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. *Total walking time: around 4,5 hours + sightseeing time.*

/breakfast/

Day 5: Riomaggiore to Levanto

Today you walk in eastern direction. From Riomaggiore, you commence your walk to Campiglia and Portovenere. You hike up a long flight of stairs to the Santuario della Madonna di Montenero. 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 returning to Riomaggiore by boat. *Total walking time: around 4,5 hours + sightseeing time (5,5 hours with extra option).*

/breakfast/

Day 6: Camogli to San Fruttuoso

From Riomaggiore you take the train to Camogli, 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 beautiful Camogli itself.

Total walking time: around 3,5 hours + sightseeing time (shorter option: 1,5 – 2,5 hours).

/breakfast/

Day 7: 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, long 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, approaching this 11th century jewel from the other end. You can choose to return by boat to Santa Margherita, or directly to Camogli.

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

/breakfast/

Day 8: Departure

The trip ends after breakfast unless you have booked other services with us. Remember to leave the key and pick up your passport. Take a bus or taxi to the airport.

/breakfast/

**DETAILED ROAD BOOK AND MAP
WILL BE PROVIDED UPON ARRIVAL**

Terrain

There are pathways covering the entire area and one can hike the entire stretch in a good day. The hikes though are not for the casual hiker. Some points of the walk are steep and the paths very narrow. There are also harrowing points where there is not much between the narrow path and hundred foot drops to the beach. It is advisable when planning to make the hikes that proper footwear and clothing is worn and the weather is checked before departure.

Practical information

Best arrival & departure airport: Pisa, Genoa or Florence Airports

The tour starts in Levanto. There are frequent trains from all directions.

There is the possibility to park a car here (about € 12,00 /day).

The tour ends after breakfast on day 8 in Camogli. The return is most easily made by train. Back to Levanto is 30 minutes by train.

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

Accommodation & boarding

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 2/3-star hotels. All rooms have en-suite facilities. You will be free to organise your dinner from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. No picnic lunches are included in the tour price, but these can be prepared for you or materials for picnics can be purchased in the villages where you stay.

Nights 1, 2: These are spent at Levanto, a nice old medieval city, we stay in a welcoming and comfortable 3 star hotel, centrally located at walking distance from all the main monuments of the medieval town centre.

Nights 3, 4 & 5: These three nights are spent in the lively little village of Riomaggiore, the most eastern of the five villages, with colourful houses and a charming little harbour.

Nights 6 & 7: The last two nights are spent in the wonderful small harbour town of Camogli, perhaps the most charming place of Liguria, the gate to the Portofino Peninsula.

Luggage transportation

Luggage transfers are relatively costly here, as, while by train the distance from village to village is very short (the train goes through tunnels), by car one has to drive a long way around and often it's difficult to enter the villages by car, so a special

permit is needed. Therefore porters ask for high fees. It is possible, but it has an extra cost. While, if you opt for the 'standard' solution you will have only to take your luggage on the train.

Tour type: IT

Difficulty grade: B

Best period: February – beginning July + end August - beginning November

Weather

Throughout Central Italy you can expect temperatures between 10-25°C in spring and autumn; they can reach 35°C in July and August. Mornings can be chilly but they quickly warm up as the day goes by. Showers are common in early spring and from September on and throughout the autumn, although not every day and they tend to be either short and intense or prolonged but light. Because you are by the sea, the sea breeze tends to make the long summer days less hot. It is recommended to inquire about the weather expectations before you set out for the day, especially in mountainous surroundings. Ask your hosts.

Equipment and clothing:

Nothing compulsory. For the full list with recommended items see "General".

Extension:

Extra days can be booked in any of the accommodations 'en route'. Extra walking options will be provided!!!

The very frequent trains, which link all the villages, makes it easy for clients to modify the programme. It gives them all the freedom to do the walks in their own rhythm, or alternatively, do some sightseeing. Therefore it is possible to opt for only one accommodation on the Cinque Terre, instead of two (levanto & Riomaggiore). This one accommodation can either be Levanto, Monterosso or Riomaggiore.

It is also possible to change the itinerary of the tour: first two days in Camogli, then the Cinque Terre journey.

Group size: Min 2 persons

The price includes: accommodation in 2/3*** hotels with private facilities on bed & breakfast basis; detailed roadbook and maps in English; 24 hrs telephone assistance

The price does not include: flights and public transportation, travel insurance, transfers from and to the airport, tips, entrance fees, alcohol drinks and other personal expenses, luggage transfers;

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GENERAL

TOUR TYPES & GRADES

We provide different varieties of tours as regards to their types and difficulty grades!

Whether you will choose individual and group tours with a guide or combined tours with a guide for some part of the trip depends on you. We emphasize on using local experienced guides with knowledge of the local language, culture, history, art, etc. The tours are conducted in the English language. Guides in other languages are available upon request.

Tour types

Our tours are divided in different tour types, regardless of being guided or not or if someone travels alone or in a group. We have prepared your vacation so that you can concentrate on new impressions and experiences, awaiting you all the time. Here is a description of the various tours:

IT: Individual tours

There is no guide on this tour. You travel individually and we are responsible for the hotel overnights and /some/ transfers. Sometimes you will travel together with other people. If you wish a guide can be arranged, if ordered. We take it for granted that you can read maps, provided by us upon arrival.

Difficulty grades

To prepare yourself for the best of your vacation we recommend that you start planning it in an advance. Good physical condition is required. In order to achieve it we advise you to start walking, jogging or cycling everyday. Swimming a couple of times a week is also highly recommended. You do not need much to get yourself in shape. And don't forget that the most important tip for an unforgettable active holiday is to choose a trip which corresponds to your physical condition!

B: Moderate

Most of you, who are used to walking during a long weekend, will be in condition to cope with a tour of this level. You should be in good health condition and not too bad physical condition. We have successive days of longer and more difficult walking and days of lighter walking. Some parts of the day routes are done at a higher altitude. The paths are in good condition. We walk for 5-7h a day. You are free to skip some walks and have a rest.

Equipment and clothing:

You should always remember that you must try to keep the weight of your clothing equipment down to a minimum.

Your packed rucksack should weigh no more than 10-15 kilograms.

Recommended items: waterproof rucksack (60 l) & daypack (35 l); walking waterproof boots with suitable ankle support; sandals; light casual shoes for walking and/or for travelling; gaiters; loose, casual trousers for trekking; waterproof trousers; fleece wind stopper jacket; windproof, waterproof outer shell garment (breathable if possible!); hat for sun protection; sunglasses with UV protection; sunscreen lotion and lip balm; water bottle; torch (headlamp); mobile phone; underwear (not cotton); mosquito repellent; trekking sticks.

Vaccination

Immunisation against Hepatitis A is recommended two weeks prior departure.

Money and personal expenses

You will need some extra money to cover drinks, other sightseeing, museums, laundry and souvenirs. National currency in Italy has become the Euro, divided into 100 euro cents. Some small pensioni, trattorie and pizzerie will only accept cash but ATMs are widespread and easy to use. Here are examples of some comparative prices:

- Tea/coffee - 0,5-1 Euro
- Beer - 1,5-2 Euro
- Bottle of water - 1 Euro
- T-shirt - 10 Euro
- Slice of pizza -2-3 Euro

Cell phone coverage

Cellular phone coverage in Italy is excellent. The phone system available in Italy, GSM, offers superior digital audio quality and reception and cellular coverage in Italy is virtually all over the country. There will be some spots where coverage is not available or even the possibility of areas where there are temporary downs but in general, cellular coverage and network availability are not issues.

Electricity

Electricity in Italy is 220 volts, 50 cycles alternating current (AC). For comparison, in the United States it is 110 volts, 60 cycle AC current. If you plan on using your own 110-volt appliances, you will need a voltage converter, unless your appliance is designed to also work with 220 volts electricity (dual voltage). For example, most laptops and some electric shavers are designed to work both at 110 and 220

volts. Plugging in an appliance that is not designed to run on 220 volts electricity without using voltage converter will most likely kill it.

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Brief about Italy

- Geographical coordinates: 42 50 N, 12 50 E
- Area: 301,230 sq km (incl. Sardinia and Sicily)
- Borders: France (Northwest), the Ligurian Sea and the Tyrrhenian Sea (West), the Ionian Sea (South), the Adriatic Sea (East), Slovenia (Northeast), Austria and Switzerland (North).
- Coastline: 7, 600 km
- Elevation extremes: lowest point: Mediterranean Sea 0 m; highest point: Mont Blanc (Monte Bianco) de Courmayeur 4,748 m (a secondary peak of Mont Blanc)
- Land use: arable land: 28.07%; permanent crops: 9.25%; other: 62.68% (1998 est.)
- Population: 57,998,353 (July 2003 est.)
- Religions: predominately Roman Catholic with mature Protestant and Jewish communities and a growing Muslim immigrant community

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Weather in Liguria

The Apennine mountains provide relief from Italy's north winds, turning the climate of the Liguria coast to the mild side. When the north winds do blow in Summer, they tend to clear the humidity from the air, and wanderers of the Cinque Terre will be treated to great views, sometimes all the way to Corsica. July and August provide the highest temperatures in the Cinque Terre.

