



# Wonders of Liguria

## The quintessential Italian Coast

*Santa Margherita, San Fruttuoso, Camogli & Portofino,  
Cinque Terre, Levanto & Portovenere*



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## TRIP NOTES 2023

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## INTRODUCTION

*The region of Liguria has some amazing stretches of coastline. Among walkers the amazing Cinque Terre are probably the best known, but there are some beautiful walks to be had around glamorous Portofino too. This wonderful tour offers a good mix of great hikes and good sightseeing, bringing you past the best spots in beautiful Liguria.*

*The tour starts from the charming resort of Santa Margherita Ligure. From here you discover the wonderful Peninsula of Portofino, known mainly for colourful Portofino itself, resort for the Italian jetset, but with many other treasures to offer! Natural wonders such as the small peninsula with the castle and lighthouse of Portofino, and cultural wonders like the abbey of San Fruttuoso, located in an isolated inlet of this beautiful coastline, and the colourful postcard village of Camogli. All these treasures are best discovered on foot.*

*Then you go for a few days of discovery in the Cinque Terre ('five lands'), which 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– leads us through an extraordinary landscape of terraces, built by hand with stones and earth.*

*Enjoy the colourful fishing villages, the outstanding food and wine, the fascinating history and vibrant culture of this corner of Italy, which has always captivated the traveller. For centuries a favourite haunt of poets and writers, it has been home to generations of simple fishermen and farmers who through their labours have carved a stunningly beautiful landscape from the seaside cliffs. With every inch of space at a premium the houses appear to be built on top of each other, and the terraced vineyards and olive groves, connected by a maze of paths, offer some of the most spectacular walking to be had in the whole of Italy.*

*On this tour we take you beyond the crowds to experience the hidden treasures and authentic culture of this Italian paradise. You will discover the hidden charm of Genoa, and the hidden tracks of the Portofino Peninsula. And you'll see that it is with good reason that the Cinque Terre have become such a popular destination, but also that it only takes a little effort to get 'off the beaten track'. Just a few hundred metres from the crowds, you will find yourself surrounded by nature, suspended between vineyards and the turquoise Mediterranean. You'll discover a real Italian paradise.*



*Please note: this is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. Most of the walks are on good paths, parts of them waymarked. Average walking times: from approx. 4 to 5 hours each day.*



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## DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

### *(Day 0 Santa Margherita Ligure)*

Arrival in Santa Margherita Ligure – or close by – in case you want some extra time here. Several hotels can be booked, according to your wishes (either 'downtown' centrally located, or near the harbour or train station, ranging from 3- to 5-star. From Genoa, Pisa and La Spezia (and many other cities) there are regular trains to Santa Margherita - Portofino.

### Day 1 – Arrival Santa Margherita Ligure

Today you arrive in the charming Santa Margherita Ligure, gateway to Portofino, one of the most beautiful little towns on the Ligurian coast. After settling in at your centrally located hotel, you can take your time to wander around through the colourful historic centre and have a relaxed drink or grab a gelato on one of the many terraces. In the afternoon you'll meet your guide and, time permitting, you can go for a stroll already to explore the town or enjoy a drink. In the evening you dine in a very nice restaurant close to the hotel.

**Accommodation: S. Margherita Ligure - Meals included: 1 dinner**

### Day 2 – Camogli & its peninsula

In the morning you start a relaxed walk onto the western part of the Portofino peninsula. A 5-minute train journey brings you to the colourful Camogli, the 'City of a Thousand White Sails'. The walk takes you through the hamlet of San Rocco, a good spot to take a coffee and buy some lunch – some of the best 'focaccia' in the area, for example. Then you continue through forested areas, along a dramatic coastline with a number of impressive viewpoints, where even the French Alps are visible. You descend towards the Romanesque church of San Niccolò, set in beautiful scenery, and have a rest – and perhaps a swim – at Punta Chiappa, the westernmost point of the peninsula. Then, from the pretty little harbour of Porto Pidocchio, you take the boat to the beautifully located monastery of San Fruttuoso, dating back to the 11th century and set in its own cove, reachable only by boat or on foot. Here you can opt to make a short roundwalk, or relax on the beach. Then you take the boat back to Camogli, where you have some time to discover this beautiful little town, and have a drink at the colourful harbour. The boat trip back gives you the chance to admire the coast from another perspective.

**Accommodation: S. Margherita Ligure - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch, 1 dinner**

*Total walking distance: 10 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5 h.*

### Day 3 – The best of the Portofino Peninsula

You start your walk today from Santa Margherita Ligure, gateway to Portofino. You first make a short walk through the historical centre, where you can also do some shopping for lunch. You then start the walk into the hills and enjoy beautiful views across the bay. You pass through pretty forested areas, past a wonderful series of watermills and beautiful villas. By late morning you reach Portofino, one of the most typical Ligurian seaside villages and a popular resort for the jetsetters. You explore this charming village and then take a break in a great spot to enjoy the picnic lunch that you've prepared. Next you enjoy the stunning walk to the church & lighthouse, where you can look back on the inlet of Portofino, a name that means 'fine harbour'. You can then opt to head uphill and walk on to the Abbey of San Fruttuoso, approaching this 'jewel' from the other side, along a path with splendid views across the Gulf of Genoa. Or you can enjoy some free time in Portofino.

Then you return by boat to Santa Margherita, so that you can also admire this part of the beautiful coastline from the sea. You are free to make your own dinner arrangements tonight.

**Accommodation: S. Margherita Ligure - Meals included: 1 breakfast**

*Total walking distance: 8,5-13 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5-5 h.*

### Day 4 – Monterosso – Punta Mesco – Levanto

This morning you'll transfer to the Cinque Terre! In the morning you pack all your things and take the train for a short ride to the nice coastal town of Monterosso, the westernmost of the five Cinque Terre villages. Here you settle in at the beautiful hotel, and then take your time to wander around through the historic centre



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and buy some picnic supplies. Then you start a short, but beautiful walk, which leads you from Monterosso to Levanto, north of the Cinque Terre, featuring spectacular views up and down the coastline. The walk begins with a fairly steep ascent, but soon you enter a cool pine forest that 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 before the headland you can make a small detour to the ruins of an old 11<sup>th</sup>-century hermitage and a nearby 'semaforo' (beacon), where you get sensational views of the rugged coastline. You then continue along forest trails around the point towards Levanto, before commencing the long gentle descent that eventually brings you to the southern side of the small town, behind the castle of Levanto. You now take your time to explore Levanto, and then catch the train, which in a few minutes brings you back to Monterosso.

**Accommodation: Monterosso - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner**

*Total walking distance: 9 km. Approx. walking time: 3 h.*

### Day 5 – The 'Sentiero dell'Amore': from Riomaggiore to Vernazza

Today you walk the most famous path in the Cinque Terre, and perhaps in the whole of Italy, the so-called 'Sentiero dell'Amore'. A short train journey takes you to Riomaggiore, the southernmost of the five Cinque Terre villages, where you start the Sentiero dell'Amore (The Way of Love). You begin at Manarola, an attractive little village with steep multi-coloured houses overlooking a rocky port. From here you make your way along one of the prettiest sections of the Cinque Terre, walking around the headland and heading up the 365 steps to Corniglia, perched on a ridge overlooking the sea. You continue your ascent to the little hamlet of Prevo, walking through terraced vineyards and the occasional citrus grove. You enjoy some of the best views in the region as you approach Vernazza, dominated by its old fortress. You follow the contours of the hillsides on a narrow track that leads you up and down, before a fairly steep descent takes you into the village itself. Having a drink in Vernazza, in the wonderful town square at the harbour, resplendent with its brightly painted boats, is a good way to recover from this walking day. For those who feel like it there is the possibility of continuing the walk until Monterosso on foot, otherwise you take the train back from Vernazza. In the evening you are free to go out for dinner in one of the typical local restaurants or pizzerias.

**Accommodation: Monterosso - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 lunch**

*Total walking distance: 9 km. Approx. walking time: 3,5-4 h.*

### Day 6 – From Riomaggiore to Portovenere - by boat back to Monterosso

Your day starts with a short train journey to Riomaggiore again. Here you start a walk that leads you to Portovenere, at the very end of the peninsula, a long but enormously rewarding walk! You first catch an electric bus up to the sanctuary of the Madonna di Montenero (keen walkers can also climb up - a wonderfully scenic, but steep flight of steps!). After a short rest at the sanctuary (with a small bar & panoramic terrace!), enjoying the spectacular views, you start your walk to Campiglia. Continuing uphill you follow the contours of the coastal cliffs, pass terraced vineyards and enjoy wonderful views of the coastline, framed by clear blue waters. Passing the abandoned village of Lemmen you walk to the Colle del Telegrafo, the highest point of your walk, where again you'll find a bar for a rest. You then follow the long-distance trail 'Sentiero Number 1', a ridge-top traverse that goes from one end of the Cinque Terre to the other. You descend to the little village of Campiglia through pleasantly cool pine forests. Here you can stop for lunch and some refreshments.

After lunch you continue towards Portovenere and enjoy more spectacular views. Arriving at the 16<sup>th</sup>-Century castle above the village you may be able to catch a glimpse of the distant peaks of the Alpi Apuane, before descending down a long flight of steps that takes you to St. Peter's Point and on into the heart of the village. After time to relax and explore Portovenere, one of the most charming coastal towns in Italy, you return by boat to Levanto/Monterosso, enjoying some spectacular views again, but now from below. Tonight you have a last great meal all together to say farewell to wonderful Liguria.

**Accommodation: Monterosso - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner**

*Total walking distance: 12 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h.*

### Day 7 – Departure from Monterosso

The tour ends after breakfast today. You are brought by private taxi to the train station, from where it's easy to reach any destination. A taxi transfer to any other destination can be arranged on request.



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## TOUR DETAILS

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in beautiful, characteristic hotels, mostly historical buildings (generally 3/4-star; 4/5-star on some departure dates). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

All accommodations are on a **B&B** basis. Most evening meals are included, we have selected the best available restaurants. On two nights you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your guide can give you good tips.

Not all (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.

**Nights 1, 2 & 3:** These nights you stay in the romantic & fashionable Santa Margherita Ligure, the gateway to the Portofino Peninsula, with its characteristic painted houses built onto the steep slopes of the mountains. You stay in a beautiful 4-star hotel, centrally located. It is family-run and the friendly staff will make you feel at home.

**Nights 4, 5 & 6:** The last three nights are spent at Monterosso or at Levanto, a charming medieval town with a wonderful sandy beach and gateway to the Cinque Terre. Our recently renovated 4-star hotel is located in a great panoramic position.

### UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMMODATION

*On some dates we run an upgraded version of this tour, staying in luxurious 4-star hotels. Look for the 'Premiere Inns' signs.*

### INCLUDED

- Private English-speaking tour leader for 7 days
- Accommodation: 3 nights Santa Margherita Ligure, 3 nights Monterosso in very good \*\*\*/\*\*\*\* hotels
- Meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 dinners (in great restaurants!), 1 warm lunch, 2 picnic lunches
- All private & public (bus, boat & train) transfers as indicated throughout the entire itinerary
- Entrance fees of all sites along the itinerary (including pathways of the Cinque Terre)
- Special activities as outlined in the day by day itinerary
- Guest experts for special places
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transport
- All gratuities for baggage, porters & hotel service

### NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes
- Visas
- Travel Insurance
- Drink & meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of a personal nature



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## LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY

**Moderately easy (2/3):** Mostly easy walks, but though some include walking uphill, sometimes on paths with rough surfaces. On the Amalfi Coast there are a number of steps! On most days shortcuts are possible (as well as occasional extensions).

**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

**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 your feedback on the quality of the paths*).

**Waymarking:** Only a small part of the route is waymarked (partly by us); elsewhere it is necessary to follow the route descriptions provided together with the maps. With these it is always possible to find your route. In case you don't feel confident a local guide can be provided for some trails.

## ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

**Arrival:** The tour starts in SANTA MARGHERITA LIGURE, well connected with PISA & GENOA (nearest international airports), as well as with Milan, Rome and all other major Italian cities by a frequent (high speed) train service.

A taxi pick-up service can be arranged either from Pisa/Genoa airport or train station.

**Departure:** The tour ends after breakfast in MONTEROSSO on day 7. A taxi will bring you to the train station, where you travel on to your next destination (all can easily be reached by train). Several taxi services are available to bring you directly to your next destination.

## TOUR VARIATIONS

**It is possible to include some extra nights before or after your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'. For those who have never been to Genoa an extra day here is strongly recommended.**

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also the opportunity to visit Florence and/or Pisa. The tour can easily be extended with a few days here. Also in MILAN or ROME several good accommodations are available. Details and prices on request.

The tour can also be extended with a few days on a beautiful agriturismo in Tuscany for some relaxation in the countryside. Several superb accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

Longer and shorter versions of this tour are also available. Prices on request. Why not check out our other Cinque Terre tours as well?



## BESPOKE ADVENTURES

Many of these tours can be turned into Private 'Bespoke Adventures' to accommodate private group travel.

We can organise both "off the shelf" itineraries, as well as create custom itineraries to meet your special needs. Book the dates you want, with the family or friends you wish to bring along!

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



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