



*Independent walking tour (CIN1)*

# Cinque Terre & Portovenere

*Walking between coloured villages & terraced vineyards*



## TRIP NOTES 2024

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## INTRODUCTION

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 – takes you through an extraordinary landscape of terraces, built by hand with stones and earth.

During this tour you'll do all the best walks along the Cinque Terre: from Levanto you walk along the coast to the headland of Punta Mesco, the most notable promontory in the region, with beautiful views over the sea. It will also give you the first glance of the Cinque Terre, with the option to walk down to the first village, Monterosso al Mare. Of course you do the most 'classic' of all walks in the Cinque Terre: the walk along the coast touching all five villages: Riomaggiore, Manarola, an attractive little village with steep multicoloured houses overlooking a rocky port, Corniglia, perched on a ridge overlooking the sea, and Vernazza, arguably the prettiest of all the villages. From there can you continue through terraced vineyards and nice woodlands to Monterosso al Mare again, approaching it from the other side. Another great daywalk brings you along the several sanctuaries higher up in the mountains, with great views on the villages down at the seaside.

But the area has more to offer than the Cinque Terre only: you will walk to the small town of Portovenere, where you will spend the last nights. On the last walking day you'll visit Palmaria, a wonderful island in front of Portovenere, at the entrance to the 'Gulf of Poets'.

Of course you'll have the time to explore lively Levanto, a charming medieval town with a broad beach, where you'll stay during the first days of your tour. Levanto is a lively little town with a good beach and a charming medieval centre. As the town doesn't live from tourism only, also out of season there is still some 'local life', with bars and restaurants open. Upon request you can then either move to one of the villages on the Cinque Terre coast (we recommend Riomaggiore) or travel by train to the start of the walks.

This is a moderately easy tour which is suitable for those who have some experience of walking and a good general physical condition. 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 also have 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 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. Elsewhere you have to follow the route notes provided together with the maps. Average walking times: from approx 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 quick visit to the town centre and maybe a swim to wash off the weariness of the journey.

**Accommodation: Levanto - Hotel \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 1 h. + sightseeing time*

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

The first day walk takes you along the coast to Monterosso al Mare. The walk initially 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 headland you can make a small detour to the ruins of an old 11<sup>th</sup>-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: around 3 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 350 m. (longer options available)*

### Day 3 – To the Coast West of Levanto

Today you walk in a western direction from Levanto. 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. It then goes through the seaside hills towards the small 'village' of Framura, an aggregation of scattered hamlets on the hillside. 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 time to drink a coffee or just relax. You've also got the possibility of having lunch here. 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 4 – The "Walk of Love"

You first take the train to Riomaggiore, the southernmost of the five villages, where you can drop your luggage off at the hotel already. Then you start the most 'classic' 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 multicoloured 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 the hillside 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 and bars where you can enjoy refreshments before taking the train back to your hotel.



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**Accommodation: Riomaggiore - Hotel \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 15 km. Approx. walking time: 5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 450 m.*

**Day 5 – The Sanctuaries of Madonna di Reggio and Soviore**

Today's walk takes you into the inland of the Cinque Terre, to the churches of Madonna di Reggio and Madonna di Soviore. You first take the train to Vernazza and then walk along the coast to Monterosso, approaching this beautiful little town from the other side. After a coffee break you start climbing up to the sanctuary of Madonna di Soviore. Here you can have something to eat 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; you walk through the hills 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, past a number of little chapels, back down to Vernazza.

**Accommodation: Riomaggiore - Hotel \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 9 km. Approx. walking time: 4,5 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 550 m.*

**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. 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 16<sup>th</sup>-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 settling in at your hotel overlooking the Gulf of the Poets.

**Accommodation: Portovenere - Hotel \*\*\***

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

**Day 7 – Round walk over the Island of Palmaria**

After the longer walk yesterday, today you'll have some time to recover. There is the possibility of making an easy roundwalk over the island of Palmaria, just across the bay from Portovenere. By boat you make the short crossing and then you'll have the whole day to discover the beauty of this very Mediterranean island, immersed in the dense vegetation, overlooking the cliffs with just the seagulls and azure sky above you. Take some time to discover the impressive fortresses too and perhaps go for a swim on one of the remote beaches. Upon returning by boat to the mainland you still have time to visit the charming village of Portovenere itself and choose the restaurant for your final supper in the harbour of Venus.

**Accommodation: Portovenere - Hotel \*\*\***

*Total walking distance: 5-6 km. Approx. walking time: around 3 h. Ascent & descent: +/- 300 m.*

**Day 8 – Departure**

End of the tour.

***An extension onto the amazing Peninsula of Portofino is strongly recommended!***



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N.B. The very frequent trains, which link 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.

## TOUR DETAILS

### ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

Accommodation is on a bed and breakfast basis in 3-star quality hotels. All rooms have en-suite facilities.

No evening meals are included so you are free to choose from the wide choice of restaurants in the area. Your accommodation holder can give you good tips. Occasionally you can also choose to eat on 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 to have your lunch in a restaurant along the way.

**Nights 1, 2 & 3:** These nights are spent at Levanto, a nice old medieval town.

**Nights 4 & 5:** These two nights are spent in the lively little village of Riomaggiore, the easternmost of the five villages, with colourful houses and a charming little harbour.

**Nights 6 & 7:** The last two nights are spent in the beautiful fishing village of Portovenere in the Gulf of the Poets, in a comfortable hotel overlooking the bay.

### UPGRADE/CHANGES IN ACCOMODATION

*It is possible to do this tour staying in more luxurious 4-star hotels. Accommodation in Monterosso – the largest village in the Cinque Terre - is also available, replacing either the days in Levanto, or those in Riomaggiore. Prices on request.*

### INCLUDED

- 3 nights in Levanto\*\*\* - BB
- 2 nights in Riomaggiore\*\*\* - BB
- 2 nights in Portovenere\*\*\* - BB
- Extensive route notes, with description of the route & tourist information
- Maps at 1 : 25.000 scale (or better)
- 24/7 assistance
- Luggage transfer

### NOT INCLUDED

- Departure taxes & Visas



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- Travel Insurance
- 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, although some involve uphill walking, 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

**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:** A large part of the route is waymarked (mainly by the parks); elsewhere you need 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 LEVANTO – which is on a main railway line. You can also park your car here.

**Departure:** The tour ends after breakfast in PORTOVENERE on day 8. The return is most easily made by train (from La Spezia – which can be reached by taxi or local bus).

*N.B. Please note that there is no (cheap) parking space anywhere on the Cinque Terre except for Levanto!*

## TOUR VARIATIONS

**It is possible to include some extra nights in your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'.**

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 you can also opt for just one accommodation for the first nights on the Cinque Terre, instead of two (Levanto & Riomaggiore). This accommodation can either be at Levanto, Monterosso or Riomaggiore. The stay in Portovenere is strongly recommended to keep!

Shorter versions of this tour can be arranged. We also offer a short '[Best of Cinque Terre](#)' Tour.

If you book the optional extension you can also discover the beautiful peninsula of Portofino, not only known 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 the wonderful little towns of Camogli and Santa Margherita Ligure. Walking here is an unforgettable experience!

The tour can easily be extended with a few days in Genoa, Pisa or Florence. Several good accommodations are available. Details & prices on request.

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