

## Walking Tour the Cinque Terre: Levanto to Portovenere

Inhabited since Roman times, the tranquility of the picturesque villages contradicts their dangerous past: for centuries they were raided by pirates from nearby Corsica and North Africa. The steep mountains that rise up behind the villages are stepped with terraces filled with olive groves and vines for which the Cinque Terre are famous. This walking tour of the Cinque Terre follows stone paths that have linked the villages for centuries, starting in Levanto at the eastern end of the National Park and finishing in glorious Portovenere at the western end of the park. They twist and wind along the rugged coast passing through pine forests and terraced vineyards, with breath-taking views out over the Mediterranean, including the less walked routes from Riomaggiore to Portovenere and around the little island off Portovenere.

### **The walk:**

This is a Grade 1 Walk. The walk follows good paths which are straight forward to follow and there are some steep climbs up from the villages up to the trail. The walks are from 10 to 14 kms and can be comfortably done in half a day, which leaves you plenty of time to explore the little villages you'll be staying in. The Cinque Terre has a very good local transport system, with the villages connected by regular trains and ferries, which means that if you wish to shorten or skip a walk you can do this quite simply.

### **The accommodation:**

Hidden Italy uses the best accommodation available. On the Cinque Terre this means very comfortable, centrally located, family-run hotels. All rooms have en suite bathrooms and air-conditioning and we request sea views, although this can't always be guaranteed. Costings are calculated on two people sharing a double room.

### **The food:**

Generous breakfasts are included each day (you'll need them for your walks). With notice, the hotels will be able to prepare a cut lunch for the walk. Dinners are not included in the standard however, if you select the 'Dinners option' (which we recommend) this will include 3 course meals alla carte (ie free choice) in some of the coast's finest restaurants. The dinner option also means you'll have a guaranteed booking each night.

### **What's included in this walk?**

- Six nights accommodation
- all breakfasts
- lunch recommendations and lunches
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- maps and detailed walking instructions
- daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- drop-off at the end of the tour from Portovenere to La Spezia station (on the Rome/Genoa line)
- 24 hour backup from local manager
- **Portofino/Santa Margherita option** includes three nights accommodation, breakfasts, two dinners, a picnic lunch, maps and instructions

# Cinque Terre Walking Itinerary

## Day 1

The tour starts in Levanto, a charming coastal resort (on the main Genoa/Rome railway line).

## Day 2

The first walk follows a superb coastal path, through woods and scented scrub with breathtaking views of the gulf and the five villages of Cinque Terre. Along the way it passes the ruins of an abandoned convent, before dipping down to the first Cinque Terre village. (7 kms, 3 hrs)

## Day 3

With today's walk you start on the Sentiero Azzuro, the celebrated path that links the five villages of the Cinque Terre. The walk weaves along cliffs and through terraces, offering spectacular views over the bays and the villages, taking you to Vernazza. (6kms, 2.5 hrs)

## Day 4

This morning, you pick up the Sentiero Azzuro again passing through olive groves with views up to the ancient terraces climbing the mountains above you. You pass through two more of the Cinque Terre villages (where you can stop for lunch) before following the Via del Amore into the last of the five villages, where you'll stay the night. (An alternative high walk for this day is included in case the path is closed for restoration). (8 kms, 3 hrs)

## Day 5

Today you walk above the eastern part of the gulf to Portovenere. Initially, this quiet route takes you away from the coast, up to a religious sanctuary, where you can rest and enjoy the views, before continuing up through forest to a small village, where you can have lunch. From here you descend through more forest with breathtaking views over the sea into stunning Portovenere. (14 kms, 5 hrs)

## Day 6

The walk today starts with a short boat ride across the narrow waterway that separates Portovenere from the small island opposite. You then follow a circular route that takes you through a small fishing village, past beaches and the remains of a monastery from the 11th century, with wonderful views over the Gulf of La Spezia along the way. You return to Portovenere with the small boat. (12 kms, 3 hrs)

## Day 7

After breakfast, you'll be transferred by private vehicle to La Spezia (30 minutes away) a busy and colourful port, with a number of excellent museums, a picturesque harbour and daily markets. La Spezia has regular rail connections to Rome, Florence and Milan.

## Portofino / Santa Margherita Option

**Extend your tour by 4 days to take in Santa Margherita and Portofino – we suggest you do this prior to the Cinque Terre walk**

### **Optional Day 1**

Santa Margherita Ligure is lively and picturesque port at the foot of superb Portofino National Park, a large promontory surrounded by cliffs and small coves, which has some the most rewarding walking on the Italian Riviera. The slopes of the park are covered with wild time, pine and holm oak and offers views over successive headlands from the summit. Santa Margherita is easily accessed by rail or road and is an ideal base from which to explore this fascinating part of the Ligurian coast. You'll stay in an excellent family-run hotel near the waterfront. Dinner is at your hotel.

### **Optional Day 2**

Your walk starts with a short ferry ride around the promontory to a beautifully restored 1000 year old abbey tucked in a tiny bay that is only accessible by water or on foot. A beautiful, ancient trail takes you from here up through forest to the top of the national park and then back down through olive groves into Santa Margherita. We'll organise a picnic lunch to take with you. Along the way, you will have the option of detouring to visit the tiny port of Portofino, one of the most picturesque and glamorous spots on the Italian Riviera, sitting on a tidy bay surrounded by cypress pines, olive groves and very expensive boats. (6 kilometres, 3 hours)

### **Optional Day 3**

Today's walk starts a short train ride to a very attractive fishing port on the western side of the National Park, the 'saltiest, roughest and most piractical little place' according to Charles Dickens when he visited the town. The spectacular walk takes you along the coast, skirting the whole headland before rising to ridge top, cutting into forest and then gently descending through olive trees and palms you to the abbey, where you can have lunch and catch the ferry back to Santa Margherita.

### **Optional Day 4**

Santa Margherita is on the train line that links Genova and La Spezia. Levanto, where the Cinque Terre walking tours starts, is a 40 minute train ride from Santa Margherita.