

# Portofino and the Tigullio Gulf self-guided walk

Portofino is the star turn of the Italian Riviera, a beautifully preserved fishing village tucked into a perfect bay but it is only one of the highlights of this fascinating stretch of coastline that sits between Genoa and the Cinque Terre.

The tour starts in Camogli on the other side of the promontory, another former fishing village which was described by Charles Dickens as 'the feistiest, roughest, most piratical little place I've visited'. It's a little more couth these days but has lost none of its nautical charm. The first two walks of the tour take you through the national park that separates the Camogli and Portofino following a series of well-marked trails through pine and oak forests above spectacular coastline with some of the most beautiful views in northern Italy.

Leaving the Portofino peninsula on the third day you pick up a pilgrim of ancient paths through the foothills that wrap around behind the Gulf of Tugullio, dropping down to the lively coastal towns along the way. The tour finishes at the end of the gulf at the Bay of Silence in Sestri Levante, a delightful summer resort on the Isola Peninsula.

## The walks:

This gorgeous walk follows the pilgrim trails that run above the Liguria coast, climbing up into the forested hills each before dipping down to the bustling coastal towns in the evening, detouring into the beautiful Portofino National Park at the beginning. The trails follow a combination of ancient paved paths and well-marked walking trails. It is straightforward and without long climbs. The walks range from 6 km to 11 km per day. **This is a Grade 1 walk.**

## The accommodation:

You'll be staying mostly in excellent, centrally located, family-run 4-star hotels that have been operating since the early 1900s. They have comfortable rooms with generous breakfasts, en suite bathrooms and sea views.

## The food:

Ligurians like to use their own trusted products which come from the 350 kilometres of coastline with its rough, mountainous hinterland or is fished out of their own waters. It is an austere but delicious style of cooking that has produced such specialities as pesto sauce and foccaccia. Even the wines, grown with great effort on the steep, rocky terraces seems to have been invented in Liguria, and suits the local food perfectly.

Dinners are not included in the standard tour, 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:

- Five nights' accommodation
- All breakfasts and dinners
- Reading lists and historical and cultural notes
- Maps and detailed walking instructions
- Daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- 24 hour back-up from local operations manager

## Portofino and the Italian Riviera Itinerary

### Day 1:

You start the tour in Camogli, which is on the main La Spezia/Genoa railway line, where you'll spend your first night in a lovely hotel set in the centre of the town overlooking the sea. Dickens described Camogli as 'the saltiest, roughest, most piratical little place'. The rough edges have long gone but it remains one of the most attractive resorts on the coast.

### Day 2:

The first walk takes you along the spectacular coastline on the western edge of the Portofino National Park with vast views across the Gulf of Genoa (from here there is an extension to the tip of the point and back, 5 kms, 1.5 hrs) before climbing up into forest and then descending to Portofino. Your accommodation is in a beautiful hotel (which has been in the same family for three generations) on the main square of this celebrated village, a short walk from the port. (8 kms, 3 hrs)

Portofino optional extra day: *The extra walk starts with a short ferry ride around the Portofino promontory to a beautifully restored 1000-year-old abbey tucked in a tiny bay that is only accessible by water or on foot. Medieval stone stairs (used by the monks since the Middle Ages) take up through forest to the top of the national park then down through olive groves into the busy port of Santa Margherita. From where you can get a bus, ferry or walk back to Portofino (1 hr). (6 kms, 3 hrs)*

### Day 3:

This morning you head out of Portofino along a lovely path that winds above the coast passing through olive groves with views over bays and hidden villas to the elegant resort town of Santa Margherita Ligure. You then follow a well-marked path to a busy neighbouring port, entering the town over a Roman bridge that Hannibal himself (reputedly) crossed. 11 kms, 3.5 hrs

### Day 4:

Today's gorgeous walk starts with a 15-minute funicular ride from the port up to one of the holiest religious sanctuaries in the area, founded in the 16th century, which is 600 mts above the coast (it has a bar and a couple of good restaurants). From here, you follow an ancient and well-marked trail that takes you along a descending ridge line through beautiful oak and chestnut forests to the bustling seaside hometown Giuseppe Garibaldi, whose origins date from pre-Roman times. 10 kms, 3 hours

### Day 5:

Today, the trail takes you along the sea front to a neighbouring town before picking up the pilgrim trail again, climbing up into the hills along an old paved trail to a ruined church with breath-taking views and then coming down to Sestri Levante and the Bay of Silences, an attractive town built at the base of the Isola Peninsula. 10 kms, 3 hours

### Day 6:

Sestri Levante is on the Genoa/La Spezia line well serviced by regular trains in either direction (including to the Cinque Terre, three stops away to the east).