

Riviera of the Rising Sun: Liguria 2 (Sestri Levante to Portovenere)

This 9 day/8 night walk is the second half of the Riviera di Levante (Riviera of the Rising Sun) walk. It starts in Sestri Levante, a beautiful resort town on the eastern headland of the Tigullio Gulf and finishes at the gorgeous town of Portovenere on the Gulf of La Spezia. It is a walk of two parts: the first three days take you through some of least visited parts of the Ligurian Coast, following well-marked mountain trails through unspoilt forests and staying in laidback coastal towns quite untouched by tourism. The remaining days take you along the trails of the Cinque Terre, one of the most celebrated, and spectacular, stretches of coastline in the Mediterranean, following stone paths that have linked the fishing villages for centuries.

The highlights of the tour include: strolling around Sestri Levante's Bay of Silence; the tranquillity of the trails that take you through oak and pine forests on the first two walks; the breath-taking sea views from the ruined tower on Punte Baffe; the lanes of old Levanto; swimming at the coast's beaches; coming down a stone path for your first sight of Vernazza; dinner al fresco on the top of a tower overlooking the port; walking through the vineyards above the sea; a crisp glass of local Cinque Terre white wine in Riomaggiore; coming down above the cliffs into Portovenere; a moonlight walk to San Pietro at the tip of Portovenere; dinner on the terrace of your hotel overlooking the Gulf of La Spezia; the boat ride across the gulf for your last walk.

The walks:

The trails are well-maintained and clearly marked. The first two walks take you through mountains and valleys covered with beautiful forests with sea views where you will rarely meet another walker. They are quite long but can be shortened by taking one of the regular local trains along the way. The Cinque Terre section takes you along narrow stone paths which are straight forward to follow. There are some steep climbs up from the villages to the trail and some steep descents at the end. These walks are from 10 to 14 kms long and can be comfortably done in half a day, leaving you plenty of time to explore the little villages you'll be staying in.

Accommodation:

Hidden Italy uses the best accommodation available. On this walk this means very comfortable, centrally located, family-run hotels, a mix of 4-star hotels, 3-star hotels and a 'pensione'. All the rooms have en suite bathrooms and air-conditioning. Please bear in mind that the places you are visiting are essentially small fishing villages and don't have a range of accommodation options.

Food:

Like its inhabitants, the food of Ligurian is austere and reserved, based on the finest ingredients hard won from the rocky slopes of the Apennine Mountains and the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The classic dishes are pesto (a basil, pine-nut and garlic paste, traditionally served with a local short pasta and diced potato); focaccia (a dimpled, rustic bread served with herbs and lashing of the excellent local olive oil) and farinata (a delicious flat-bread made from chic peas with more olive oil). There is an abundance of very good seafood, complemented with very good, locally grown vegetables. The most celebrated wines of the region are dry whites (Cinque Terre and Vermentino) but Liguria also produces some good reds (Rossese di Dolceacqua, Ormeasco and Colli di Luni Rosso).

Inclusions:

- 9 days'/8 nights' accommodation
- all breakfasts (and dinners, if chosen)
- recommendations for lunch and dinners
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
maps and detailed walking instructions
- daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- private transfer from Portovenere to La Spezia station at the end
- 24 hour backup from local manager

Please note, there is a shorter version on this walk (6 days/5 nights, Levanto to Portovenere). Click here for details.

Riviera of the Rising Sun: Liguria 2

Day 1

The tour starts in Sestri Levante, a very attractive resort town that is built along a peninsula, with a bay on either side: the charming Bay of Silence and the Bay of Fairies (name in honour of Hans Christian Anderson who lived here in the 1880s). Peninsula ends with a forested hill a monastery on top.

Day 2:

The first section on today's walk follows a marked trail through forest to a headland with views back over Sestri and the Tigullio Gulf to Portofino. From here the trail rounds the peninsula, passing through more forest before descending to a small town with a long sandy beach. *Here you have the option of shortening the walk by taking the train from this point.* **7 kms, 2 hours**

The second section climbs up to another headland with the ruins of a medieval lookout tower. The path then contours around a deep valley, passing through forest before descending to another very attractive town clustered around a small port, where you'll spend the night. **8 kms, 3 hours**

Day 3:

Today's is a long walk, which can, however, be shortened by catching one of the regular trains to your overnight base. The first section passes through one of the least known and most unspoilt sections of the Ligurian coast, a bushwalk that takes you up and over the next hill to a neighbouring town. *Here you have the option of shortening the walk by taking the train from this point.* **11.5 kms, 4 hours**

The second section involves a steep climb at the beginning, following an ancient path through oak forests. It is one of the most beautiful walks along the whole route. It finishes at a very quaint town that has a long sandy beach. **4 kms 1.5 hours**

Day 4:

There is a gentle start to today's walk: you leave town along a disused railway tunnel which has recently been converted into a cycle/walking way to Levanto. After walking along the waterfront, the trail picks a superb coastal path, going through woods with breathtaking views of the gulf and the Cinque Terre. It finishes at the first of the five famous villages. **10.5 kms, 4 hours**

Day 5:

Today's walk takes you along the *Sentiero Azzurro*, the celebrated path that links the five Cinque Terre villages. The well-marked trail weaves along cliffs and through terraces, offering spectacular views over the villages and the sea. It finishes at the second, and most picturesque, of the villages. **6 kms, 2 hours**

Day 6:

You pick up the *Sentiero Azzurro* again and walk to the fourth village, perched high above the water. From here, you climb uphill and then contour through vineyards before descending to a tiny fishing village wedged into a steep gully. From here it's a short walk around to Riomaggiore, the last of the five villages. **8 kms, 3 hours**

Day 7:

Today you walk above the eastern part of the gulf to Portovenere. It's a big climb up to the ridge. First stop is a religious sanctuary, before continuing up through forest to the top (600 mts asl). From here you slowly descend to a small village where you can pause for a break. The final section is a long steady descent through forest to the spectacularly situated Portovenere. **14 kms, 5 hours**

Day 8:

The walk this morning starts with a short boat ride across the narrow waterway that separates Portovenere from a fascinating island which has a small fishing village and the remains of a monastery from the 11th century. You return by boat to Portovenere. **12 kms, 3 hours**

Day 9:

Transfer to La Spezia, thirty minutes' drive away. La Spezia is a busy and colourful port, which has a number of excellent museums and good rail connections.