

Below is the proposed itinerary for the trip. As is true on any adventure travel trip, plans for any specific day may be modified due to weather considerations, unforeseen circumstances, new opportunities, and group interests.

DAY 1

Arrive Florence, Introductions, Afternoon History and Culture Tour and Welcome Dinner

Meet in Florence by 1PM. After introductions, we will start our week with a walking tour of the major landmarks in Florence, learning about the history and culture from our local Florentine guide. If you can't arrive until later, you can meet us at the hotel at 5PM. where we'll start getting acquainted before going out for our first dinner together.

Overnight: Florence (D)

DAY 2

Morning Culinary Tour, Transfer to Camogli, Free Time to Swim and Visit Town

Today we will explore another side of Florence today with a culinary tour. We'll sample some of Italy's best- known delights as we stop at different shops to taste everything from antipasti to dessert before stopping for lunch.

Well-fed, we will say good-bye to Florence, and embark on a three-hour drive to the lovely town of Camogli. Camogli, situated on the Ligurian Coast just north of Cinque Terre National Park, is known for lively streets, cafes, restaurants, and boutiques. We will have time to swim or explore the town and visit Castle Dragone near the harbor.

Driving: 3 hours in private van. Walking: 2 miles. Overnight: Camogli (B,L,D)

DAY 3

Hike from Portofino Peninsula to Abbey of San Fruttoso

After breakfast, we start walking from our hotel and climb across the Portofino Peninsula with spectacular views of the sea and the Portofino Marine Reserve. We'll have lunch along the way at "Agriturifugio Mulino", a farmhouse restaurant, and then hike down to the remote 13th century Abbey of San Fruttuoso. Located in a beautiful small bay, it is accessible only by foot or boat. We will catch a boat ride back to Camogli, stopping along the way in Portofino. You'll see why the rich and famous flock to this gorgeous town; its harbor is filled with yachts and its cliff-side coast is lined with impressive villas.

Hiking: Approximately 4.5 -5 hours, 5.4 miles with steep rocky up and downhill trail sections. Overnight: Camogli (B,L,D)

DAY 4

Transfer to Monterosso al Mare, Walk to Capuchin Church and Hilltop Cemetery, Free Time with Options

After breakfast we drive to Monterosso al Mare, the northernmost village in the Cinque Terre and our home for the next four nights. After dropping our luggage at the hotel, we will walk through town and visit the Capuchin Church and Hilltop Cemetery in a ruined castle. We'll finish our walk at the Buranco organic farm for wine tasting and lunch. After lunch you can relax, swim, shop or hike up to the Madonna del Soviore Monastery, a retreat above the hustle of village life.

Hiking: about 6 miles of steep up and down cobbled trail and gravel road. Overnight: Monterosso al Mare (B,L,D)

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DAY 5

Train to Levanto and Walk Back to Monterosso, Free Time, Afternoon Cooking Class

A short train ride brings us to the village of Levanto, once a walled town and major stronghold of the Genoese. We leave Levanto on foot and walk across the peninsula past Punta Mesco with views over Levanto's medieval walls and tiled roofs, a lovely wooded area, and eventually the magnificent stretch of the Cinque Terre coast. We'll enjoy a picnic lunch and amazing views at Punta Mesco before returning to Monterosso. The afternoon is yours to do as you like, before we meet again in time for a cooking class to discover the secrets of Pesto (which originated here) and other Italian specialties. For dinner we'll feast on the fruits of our labor.

Hiking: about 4 hours, 5 miles steep up and down a combination of trail, rocky steps and rural road. Overnight: Monterosso al Mare (B,L,D)

DAY 6

Walk from Monterosso al Mare to Corniglia

Today we walk from our hotel up past agricultural terraces and then down to Vernazza, a village so charming, it's one of the most photographed in the Cinque Terre. After exploring the shops and narrow pedestrian streets, we'll continue on to Corniglia, a village perched on cliffs high above the sea. (Note: If you feel like taking a day off from hiking, you can do part of the itinerary by train today and tomorrow.) We will enjoy lunch at a terrace restaurant and then take the train back to Monterosso. Dinner is on your own tonight to enjoy any of the wonderful restaurants in Monterosso.

Hiking: 3.5 hours, 4.5 miles total: 1.5 hours, 2 miles of steep ups and downs to Vernazza, and 2 hours, 2.5 miles, to Corniglia. Overnight: Monterosso al Mare (B,L)

DAY 7

Walk from Corniglia to Manarola via Volastra

After a delicious breakfast, we take the train back to Corniglia to continue our Cinque Terre village walks. Our hike takes us up and along the high route to Manarola with stunning views over the Cinque Terre and through the ancient hamlet of Volastra for lunch. We then hike down to the seaside village of Manarola where we have time to look around town, and perhaps indulge in a gelato before taking the train back to our hotel in Monterosso and dinner at the Ancora della Tortuga.

Hiking: About 5 miles of long steep trail and stone stairs, both up and down and a trail section with exposure to a vertical drop. Overnight: Monterosso al Mare (B,D)

DAY 8

Walk from Riomaggiore to Campiglia, Van Transport to Porto Venere

This morning we take the train to the 5th village in the Cinque Terre, Riomaggiore. Our hike is mostly uphill past terraced fields and splendid forests of pine, chestnut, and cork trees. We will enjoy more breathtaking views of the coast throughout the morning and lunch in the hamlet of Campiglia, where we picnic on a terrace of a small "Alimentari" shop. Then we transfer by van to Portovenere. We'll check into our hotel (our luggage was transferred separately) and have some free time to explore the cobbled streets of this charming seaside town. Here, spectacular cliffs rise above the crystal blue waters of the Mediterranean in a setting so beautiful that Byron, Shelley and D.H. Lawrence (among others) wrote here: thus, the Gulf of Poets was named.

Hiking: about 6.2 miles, mostly long, gradual uphill on trails with some stone steps. Train ride: about 15 minutes. Driving: 20 minutes. Overnight: Portovenere (B,L,D)

DAY 9

Hike Around island of Palmaria, Free Time in Portovenere

A short boat ride this morning takes us through the harbor to the nearby island of Palmaria. This island has been the guardian of Portovenere for centuries and still has remnants of Napoleon-era forts. We walk around the island with views of the colorful buildings perched on the promontory of Portovenere and the tiny nearby island of Tino. Our path travels through a distinct native ecosystem referred to as Mediterranean Macchia, with plants, such as arbutus, broom, and myrtle, adapted to the dry, harsh heat and heavy seasonal rains. We return to Portovenere mid-day and have some free time before dinner to explore the 16th-century Genovese naval fortress that once protected Portovenere from marauding corsair pirates, walk by the "Poet's Grotto", or do some last shopping in the many charming boutiques. Tonight, we'll enjoy our last Italian feast together.

Boat: 10 minutes each way. Hiking: 3 miles, 2.5 hours on rocky trails and pathways with short, steep sections. Overnight: Porto Venere (B,L,D)

DAY 10

Ciao Italia! Transfer to Pisa and Departure

After our last shared breakfast, we will pack up and transfer in our private van to the Pisa International Airport. We'll arrive by noon and you can plan flights out after 1 p.m. (B)