

ITALY

Portofino & Cinque Terre

A Guided Walking Adventure





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Travel Style

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep in to the fabric of local life. On it, you'll enjoy 24/7 expert guides, premium accommodations, delicious meals, effortless transportation, and local wine or beer with dinner. Rest assured that every trip detail has been anticipated so you're free to enjoy an adventure that exceeds your expectations.

And, with our **optional Flight + Tour Combo**, **Genoa Pre-Tour Extension**, and **Florence Post-Tour Extension** to complement this destination, we take care of all the travel to simplify the journey. Refer to the attached itinerary for more details.



Overview

The Italian Riviera, stretching from the French border to La Spezia, is an enchanting coastline of ancient fishing ports, medieval towns, and beaches. You walk the Riviera di Levante (the Eastern Coast), an inspiration to beloved poets Shelley, Byron, and Petrarch—its natural beauty and tantalizing cuisine continue to intoxicate travelers. Fresh and simple seafood, homemade pasta, and a medley of vegetables and aromatic herbs make for authentic dining experiences. Pesto, made from locally grown basil—the best in Italy according to the locals—is the classic pasta sauce of the region. Sciacchetrà, a hard-to-find semisweet dessert wine, is also a regional specialty.

The Riviera di Levante's spectacular cliffs, secluded coves, and naval port at La Spezia were ruled over the centuries by Greeks, Saracens, Romans, Venetians, Lombards, French, and Piemontese, not to mention trade with Sicily, Spain, and northern Africa. The year-round temperate climate, Mediterranean beaches, and the Maritime and Ligurian Apennine mountain chains contribute to the sensuous feel of this lovely area. Your walks take place in and around the Cinque Terre ("Five Lands") and the towns of Portofino and Portovenere. You follow well-established trails through a mélange of tiny, pastel-colored villages, with plenty of time for exploration, shopping, or savoring the sights from a seaside café.



Daily Itinerary

DAY 1

Meeting in Santa Margherita Ligure. Nozarego to Portofino; 2 miles, easy to moderate, 385-ft. elevation gain and 885-ft. elevation loss

After meeting at your seaside hotel, a brief public bus ride takes you to the village of Nozarego, the starting point for an approximately two-hour afternoon walk to the seaside resort of Portofino. From the charming sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve (situated at 500 feet above sea level), a 10-minute ascent over the luxuriant green hillside, followed by a short level stretch, brings you to the hamlet of Gave and its restored chapel, the Oratorio di San Gerolamo. From here you enjoy a wonderful view over the Abbey of Cervara, an Italian national monument dating to the 14th century, before continuing on to Portofino in one of two directions—the route decided upon by your guide(s).

The first option rewards you with a less-challenging walk along a shaded, cobble path past farmhouses, through terraced olive groves down to Paraggi, a tiny coastal town bordered by a beautiful sandy beach. An easy paved promenade, shaded beneath the canopy of a holm oak forest, winds along the sea delivering you to the cobblestoned streets of Portofino.

The alternative option departs the hamlet of Gave along an undulating path before reaching Acqua Morta and Acqua Viva, two small streams, the second so-

called because it gave life to a series of 35 olive, chestnut, and wheat mills (one of which is now a visitors' center), while the former did not have any mills along its course. Reaching Olmi, the highest point of today's walk at 885 feet, you begin the long descent down a paved path into Portofino, passing by the chapel of San Sebastiano and enjoying splendid views along the way.



The picturesque village of Portofino, nestled into a cove between hills, was rediscovered by the jet set shortly after World War II and is considered to be among the most beautiful Mediterranean ports. Where once only fishing boats docked in the emerald-green inlet, now yachts arrive from around the world. You may choose to relax at an open-air café in the main piazza overlooking the colorful boats bobbing in the harbor, while indulging in a *pacigo*—a heavenly cup of strawberry and vanilla gelato (Italian ice cream) topped with fresh berries and cream. There is time to independently explore the small streets and browse the town's boutiques and shops. For stunning views of the entire bay and the Tigullio Gulf, you can walk from the famous village square, simply called La Piazzetta, up to the Church of San Giorgio. Perched high above the town, this church contains relics of St. George, Portofino's patron saint. From here continue to another lookout point at the Castello Brown, a castle dating to the 16th century, before moving on to the very tip of the promontory and the Punto del Capo (Portofino lighthouse).

You return to Santa Margherita via a 20-minute ferry (time- and weather-dependent) or bus ride before gathering for an *aperitivo* and orientation meeting at your hotel. Dinner tonight is a welcome feast of typical Ligurian specialties, complemented by the region's crisp white wine, savored in a seaside setting.

Hotel Metropole, Santa Margherita Ligure

A family-run hotel ideally located on the seaside promenade, complete with bar, restaurant, gardens, pool, and private beach. Rooms are divided between the main building and the Villa Porticciolo, and most have a terrace or balcony. Additional amenities include a Turkish bath, small gym, and massage services.

DAY 2

Ruta to San Fruttuoso; 3.5 miles, moderate to challenging, 750-ft. elevation gain and 1,500-ft. elevation loss. Additional option of San Fruttuoso to Portofino; 3 miles, moderate to challenging

After a satisfying breakfast of coffee, bread, cheese, yogurt, and fruit, you transfer by public bus to the tiny and picturesque village of Ruta, where you enter the Regional Park of Portofino for an approximately 4-hour morning walk. An initial 45-minute, 500-foot undulating yet steady ascent along a shady trail punctuated with a series of rough steps brings you to a spectacular ridgeline trail commanding an enchanting view of the Bay of Tigullio to the east and the Bay of Paradise and city of Genova to the west. Continuing beneath a canopy of chestnut, pine, and oak trees, you traverse the Portofino promontory—ascending 160 feet over a 40-minute period—and arrive at Semaforo Nuovo (“New Signal Station”). At 1,300 feet, you are rewarded with radiant coastal views. Refueled with a snack and water break, you set off on a beautiful cliffside path overlooking the Cala dell’Oro Bay and the Bay of Fruttuoso. The dirt trail—bordered by fragrant Mediterranean *macchia*, myrtle, and berries—gently climbs and descends for just over an hour, at which point you reach Pietre Strette (“Narrow Stones”), an area of narrow canyons surrounding the 1,500-foot summit of the forested ridge. Over the next hour you descend several stony switchbacks and old mule paths (elevation loss of 1,500 feet) to sea level and the hamlet of San Fruttuoso. This secluded haven, which can only be reached on foot or by boat, is picturesquely situated in a small, rocky cove. Under ownership and protection of the National Trust of Italy, this hamlet has recently begun the process toward recognition as a UNESCO World Heritage site.

Following an optional swim in the inviting clear blue waters of the San Fruttuoso Bay, you sit down to a much-anticipated lunch—perhaps a fresh green salad along with the region’s signature dish, homemade pasta with pesto. Following lunch, you may accompany your guide(s) on a fascinating visit to the Abbazia di San Fruttuoso, a 10th-century medieval abbey. This afternoon, you may choose to continue on a scenic two-hour walk to Portofino; otherwise opt to indulge in a bit of *la dolce vita* by taking a boat back to Santa Margherita (with a possible stop in Portofino). This evening you reunite for a delectable meal beginning with bountiful seafood *antipasti* and followed perhaps by the classical Ligurian *primo*, *pansoti con salsa di noci* (cheese-filled pasta topped with walnut sauce).

Hotel Metropole, Santa Margherita Ligure

DAY 3

Cinque Terre: Corniglia to Vernazza; 2.5 miles, moderate with challenging sections, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss. Afternoon option: Vernazza to Monterosso; 2.5 miles, moderate with challenging sections, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss. **Please note: due to the fragile nature of the Cinque Terre landscape, some trails may be closed**



in the event of inclement weather or to accommodate necessary repairs. In such circumstances, a comparable walk will be offered and the rest of the day's highlights will remain unchanged.

This morning a 75-minute train ride brings you to the heart of Cinque Terre. The “Five Lands” of the Cinque Terre are Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore: five small, remote villages strung along the coast northwest of La Spezia. They are linked by boat, rail, and footpath, allowing you to customize your walking experience over the next few days. This morning’s walk begins in Corniglia, the most untouched of the Cinque Terre villages. Unlike the others, Corniglia is not directly adjacent to the sea. Instead, it is on the top of a promontory more than 300 feet above the sea, surrounded on three sides by vineyards and terraces, while the fourth side descends steeply into the sea. You follow a narrow trail for approximately two hours, passing terraced vineyards, clinging to the hillsides. A steep descent along stone steps brings you to the picturesque town of Vernazza, where you enjoy lunch on your own at one of the many cafés along the vibrant waterfront piazza.

The afternoon walk, and arguably one of the most spectacular, begins directly from Vernazza and continues for approximately two hours along a well-established footpath while offering views of the Ligurian Sea. The trail winds up and down through groves of lemon, orange, and olive trees and beautifully terraced vineyards supported by hundreds of miles of hand-built dry stone walls. Known as *mura a secco*, these walls are a testament to the centuries of labor involved in shaping this fascinating landscape. Traversing extremely narrow trails—perched on terraces with a wall on one side and a drop of 10 to 15 feet on the other—you pass farmers at work using monorail systems to transport grapes and supplies up and down the steep hillsides. You reach Monterosso al Mare, the largest of the Cinque Terre villages, late afternoon, where you pause for a refreshment before continuing by train for the five-minute ride to Levanto.



After settling in to your new home for two nights, you reunite for a delicious dinner of freshly caught seafood accompanied by a glass of *vermentino* from a nearby vineyard.

Park Hotel Argento, Levanto

Perched above the graceful curve of Levanto's stunning waterfront, Park Hotel Argento enjoys a panoramic view of the

coastline and ancient village below. A modern property in a quiet setting, it offers a swimming pool, wellness center with sauna and Turkish bath, and a restaurant and bar. Guest rooms are spacious and luminous.

DAY 4

Levanto to Monterosso; 3.5 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,300-ft. elevation gain and loss

After breakfast, perhaps enjoyed on the outdoor terrace, you set off directly from the hotel on the day's scheduled walk. Levanto is an ancient town, known as the "Gateway to the Cinque Terre," and as you stroll along its curved and colorful main street you may stop to visit its medieval frescoed loggia and Chiesa di Sant'Andrea (Church of Saint Andrew), exemplary of 13th-century Ligurian Gothic style with its façade decorated in black-and-white bands, and a magnificent rose window crowning the main door. (You may opt out of the walk and enjoy an independent morning relaxing at the hotel, exploring town, or taking a train directly to Monterosso al Mare, where you meet the group for lunch.) The trail begins along Levanto's medieval walls on a long, gradual climb that traces an ancient trade route passing through olive groves and terraced vineyards. It eventually levels off for an easy stretch with spectacular views before beginning another rigorous ascent over rough steps through oak woods. A much easier section of trail ensues through a pine forest, culminating at the promontory of Punta Mescio. At 1,000 feet, your hard work is rewarded with an amazing bird's-eye view of all five villages of the Cinque Terre. A final steep 45-minute descent down large stone steps delivers you to Monterosso al Mare and the best beach in the Cinque Terre.

A special meal rewards your efforts and refuels you for an afternoon and evening of independent exploration. Your guide(s) provide suggestions from among the

many dining experiences available in Levanto (as well as Monterosso al Mare should you choose to stay on into the evening).

Park Hotel Argento, Levanto

DAY 5

Corniglia to Manarola via Volastra; 4 miles, moderate with challenging

sections, 985-ft elevation gain and 1,500-ft elevation loss. Transfer to Portovenere. **Please note: due to the fragile nature of the Cinque Terre landscape, these trails may be closed in the event of inclement weather or to accommodate necessary repairs. In such circumstances, a comparable walk will be offered and the rest of the day's highlights will remain unchanged.**



Today's exploration includes more of the picturesque "Five Lands" and culminates in the charming medieval town of Portovenere, situated at the mouth of the spectacular Golfo dei Poeti (Gulf of Poets). The gulf is so named because many poets, including Dante, Petrarch, Byron, and Shelley, have sung its praises—even the boats in the harbor sport romantic names inspired by these poets.

Similar to the two previous days' trails, the route from Corniglia to Volastra begins with a steep ascent up a set of stone steps and through pine and oak woods before leveling off through a very panoramic (and very narrow) trail through terraced vineyards. After pausing to admire the views and perhaps a refreshment, you set off on your next leg: an hour walk to the cozy, classic seaside town of Manarola and the center of Cinque Terre's wine production. Lunch is a simple and delicious meal of local specialties.

A ferry ride (weather dependent) brings you to your final destination: the Roman-Byzantine town of Portovenere, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where you view both the sea and the nearby Apuan Alps. The captivating town paints a colorful canvas against the azure sea with its tall and narrow pastel-colored houses lining the waterfront promenade. Perched high on a rocky cape overlooking the sea is San Pietro, a 13th-century Gothic church. Its black-and-white-striped exterior has made it a landmark recognizable from far out at sea. After settling in to your seaside hotel, you reconvene for another tasty meal of regional specialties.



Hotel Paradiso, Portovenere

Situated on the Gulf of Portovenere, the Hotel Paradiso features comfortable guest rooms with views of the sea and nearby Apuan Alps, as well as a fine restaurant with an outdoor terrace.

DAY 6

Isola Palmaria; 2.5 miles, easy to moderate, 1,200-ft. elevation gain and

loss

Following breakfast on the terrace overlooking the sea, you begin the day's adventure with a boat trip across the bay to Palmaria. This beautiful island, declared a Natural Regional Park, boasts a network of walking paths with stunning viewpoints of its dramatic cliffs and nearby Tino Island. Disembarking in the small harbor of Terrizzo, home to the island's few homes and a restaurant, an easy 20-minute walk leads you to the meticulously restored 19th-century fortress of Umberto I, which now houses a museum dedicated to the oceanography and undersea archaeology of the Mediterranean. From this spectacular viewpoint, the trail gently ascends into a sea of terraced olive groves before leveling off through a forest of holm oak and pinewood. The air is perfumed by sage, broom, and myrtle underfoot as you approach the southern tip of the island. Here lush Mediterranean vegetation is replaced by steep rocky cliffs, deep ravines, and abandoned quarries of the golden-veined black Portoro marble—now home to wild goats and an extensive colony of herring gulls. A challenging, yet short (20-minute) climb leads to the summit where you are rewarded with unsurpassed 360-degree views.

After a snack and water break, a 45-minute descent by way of an asphalt road or more challenging dirt trail returns you to the hamlet of Terrizzo, where your boat is waiting. Time and weather permitting, you boat around the island to explore several wonderful grottoes—the famous Grotta Azzurra (Blue Grotto), the Grotta Vulcanica, a volcanic grotto housing an ancient freshwater spring, and the Grotta dei Colombi, where Paleolithic evidence was discovered in the 19th century—before returning to Portovenere for lunch at a seaside trattoria.

Following lunch, you may accompany your guide(s) on an optional walking tour of Portovenere, whose highlights include the churches of San Pietro and San Lorenzo and the Genovese Doria Castle. This evening a sumptuous farewell

feast of seafood from surrounding waters awaits—at a perfect venue for toasting your Ligurian adventure and new friends.

Hotel Paradiso, Portovenere

DAY 7

Departure from Florence

After breakfast, a private transfer brings you to Florence where you continue your explorations or make train or plane connections for your onward travels.

ITINERARY CHANGES

Please bear in mind that this is a typical itinerary, and the actual activities, sites, and accommodations may vary due to season, special events, weather, or transportation schedules. We reserve the right to alter the itinerary, since tour arrangements are made up to a year in advance and unforeseen circumstances may arise that mandate change. This is particularly true for days three and five of this tour; due to the fragile nature of the Cinque Terre landscape, these trails may be closed in the event of inclement weather or to accommodate necessary repairs. In such circumstances, a comparable walk will be offered and the rest of the day's highlights will remain unchanged. Itinerary changes are made to improve the tour and your experience.

RESPONSIBLE TRAVEL

Country Walkers is a leader in active travel with responsible tourism an integral part of our core values. Our tours reflect our dedication to best travel practices—and to the preservation of indigenous cultures and the environment. Country Walkers has made a donation on behalf of every traveler to the CW Travelers Fund, which supports designated projects in the communities and habitats in which we travel. We invite you to learn more about our efforts and initiatives for giving back.

Here's just one example that highlights our sustainable practices:

On a bluff just outside of Monterosso, the historic Convento dei Cappuccini chapel and monastery boasts a history dating back to the 17th century and art treasures by the likes of Van Dyck and Strozzi. A local cultural hub, it has played host to concerts, conferences, and theatrical performances for the surrounding community and has been beloved by locals for its seaside garden, orchards, and vineyards. However, in March 2013, severe landslides destroyed the convent's beautiful grounds. Though the cost of restoring the “paradise of the monks” was far beyond the modest means of the town or diocese, the project “Let's Rebuild Monterosso's Paradise” was soon created to begin raising money. Country Walkers is proud to contribute to this rebuilding project.

Tour Itinerary Overview

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Metropole (lobby), Santa Margherita Ligure, Italy, 2:00 p.m. (after lunch)

NIGHTS 1 & 2

Hotel Metropole

Via Pagana, 2
Santa Margherita Ligure, Italy
Tel 011 39 0185 286134
Fax 011 39 0185 283495
Email hotel.metropole@metropole.it
metropole.it

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 3 & 4

Park Hotel Argento

Via Sant-Anna
Levanto, Italy
Tel 011 39 0187 801223
Fax 011 39 0187 800474
Email info@parkhotelargento.com
parkhotelargento.com

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

NIGHTS 5 & 6

Hotel Paradiso

Via Garibaldi, 34-40
Portovenere, Italy
Tel 011 39 0187 790612
Fax 011 39 0187 792582
Email info@hotelportovenere.it
paradisohotel.net

Wireless Internet, hair dryers, and laundry service available.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Hotel Balestri, Florence, Italy, 12:00 p.m.

EMERGENCY CONTACT

One Call International

Email mail@oncallinternational.com

If communicating from within the US

Text 603.945.0103

Tel 800.555.9095

If calling from outside the US

Tel 603.894.4710

When calling from outside the USA, you will need to dial the access code for the country you are calling from (a complete list of access codes, provided by AT&T, can be found on the Country Walkers website under Travel Tips and Travel Resources: International Access Codes).

In the unlikely event you are unable to connect by phone with One Call, or the region you are calling from does not have an access code, you should speak with a live international operator and ask them to place a collect call to 800.555.9095 or 603.894.4710.

TRAVEL INSURANCE

We offer guests the opportunity to purchase a Travel Protection Plan. Please contact us for details.

Tour Facts at a Glance

TOUR LENGTH (WITHOUT FLIGHT PACKAGE)

7 days, 6 nights

DEPARTURE DATES AND PRICE

Please refer to our website for the most current list of departure dates, scheduled group tour and private tour prices.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Metropole (lobby), Santa Margherita Ligure, Italy, 2:00 p.m. (after lunch)

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Hotel Balestri, Florence, Italy, 12:00 p.m.

ACTIVITY LEVEL

The Cinque Terre is one of our Guided Walking Adventures, rated moderate with challenging sections. This tour is more of a hiking experience than a walking experience. You should be in excellent physical condition with good balance and no orthopedic or cardiovascular conditions. While hikes average 3 to 5 miles per day, elevation gains and losses range up to 1,300 feet. Please note that the Cinque Terre region is characterized by terrain that varies greatly: there are very few stretches of flat walking; therefore you will be ascending, descending, or walking on rolling, rocky paths daily. Some days include lengthy ascents ranging from 30 to 45 minutes, beginning with 10 to 20 minutes of steep stair climbing on high stone steps. The hiking trails level out for periods and then descend steeply, also over stone steps.

Your hikes take you over trails that can be: rocky with loose gravel; hard-packed dirt; uneven, stone steps; and pine needle-covered dirt paths through wooded areas. Some of the hikes are exposed, with little coverage from the sun, which, depending upon the temperature, can increase the challenge of this tour. A walking stick is recommended, even if you do not usually use one. The pace on this tour is leisurely with stops en route to explore villages, visit historical sites, or to swim in the Ligurian Sea.

INCLUSIONS

- » Two expert, local guides (for groups of 8 or more), with you 24/7
- » All meals except for one lunch and one dinner; local wine included
- » All accommodations while on tour
- » Transportation from the meeting point to the departure point
- » Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary
- » Destination information (weather, visa requirements, etc.) and other travel assistance available 24/7 provided by One Call International
- » The unbeatable and cumulative experience of the Country Walkers staff

LET THE JOURNEY BEGIN

Prior to your adventure you will be asked to sign a Passenger Participation Agreement and you will receive:

- » Luggage tags
- » List of travel companions and guide biographies

GRATUITIES

Gratuities for all hotels, meals, and services that are included in your tour price will be paid by Country Walkers. Should you wish to tip your Country Walkers guide(s), the standard in the industry ranges from \$10 to \$15 per person, per guide, per day (or \$20 to \$30 per couple, per guide, per day), and can be paid in USD or local currency.

Traveling To and From Your Tour

If you are interested in reserving the **optional Flight + Tour Combo** and **pre- or post-tour extensions**, please refer to the attached itinerary for more details.

TOUR MEETING POINT AND TIME

Hotel Metropole (lobby), Santa Margherita Ligure, Italy, 2:00 p.m. (after lunch)

Your guide(s) will be wearing a Country Walkers shirt. Please be dressed for an afternoon walk to Portofino.

MOST CONVENIENT AIRPORT

Genoa's (Genova) Cristoforo Colombo Airport (GOA) is the closest airport to the starting point of the tour but requires connections from the U.S.

aeroportodigenova.com

Florence's Aeroporto di Firenze-Peretola (FLR) (formerly Amerigo Vespucci) or Pisa's Galileo Galilei Airport (PSA) are the closest airports to the end of the tour. Please note that as of June, 2015, the two airports have merged and are now known collectively as Toscana Aeroporti. Flights continue to arrive and depart from each airport, and information pertaining to each airport location can be found by visiting the website below.

toscana-aeroporti.com

Milan's (Milano) Malpensa Airport (MXP) is the closest major international airport with nonstop service from many U.S. cities.

milan-mxp.com

Please refer to the Italian Government Tourist Office website, **enit.it**, for additional information about Italian airports and transportation to and from the airport. You may also wish to visit the Italian Tourism Official Website at **italia.it**.

GETTING TO THE MEETING POINT

From the Santa Margherita Ligure train station:

Taxi: Taxis are readily available at the Santa Margherita Ligure train station. The ride from the station to the hotel takes about 5 minutes and costs approximately 10 euros.

From Genoa's airport (closest airport to the meeting point):

Taxi: Taxis are readily available at the Genoa Airport. A taxi to the Genoa train station (for onward train connections to Santa Margherita Ligure) takes about 15-20 minutes and costs approximately 20 euros. Alternately, a taxi directly from the Genoa airport to Hotel Metropole takes 45 minutes and costs 100 euros.

From Pisa's airport:

Train: Pisa has two train stations; Pisa Centrale and Pisa Aeroporto. The two stations are connected by a direct service that takes 5 minutes. Pisa Centrale is the city's main train station and is located on the edge of the city; just a 5-10 minute taxi ride from points in the historic center. Pisa Aeroporto is the train station located directly at the Pisa Airport, which is a 10-15 minute taxi ride from the historic center (less than one mile). Pisa Aeroporto also offers service to Florence's Santa Maria Novella train station, including a few stops in between. If you arrive at the Pisa Airport, you will likely need to take a train from Pisa Aeroporto to Pisa Centrale before continuing on to Santa Margherita Ligure.

From Milan's Malpensa airport:

Train: To reach Milan's Central train station for onward connections to Santa Margherita Ligure, you may take the hour-long Malpensa shuttle, which departs every 20 minutes at a cost of approximately 4.50 euros. Alternately, metered taxis are available outside both Arrivals and Departures areas; the journey to Milan's Central Train Station takes about an hour and costs approximately 95 euros. A third option is the Malpensa express train, which departs every 20-30 minutes from Terminal 1 for Milan's Cadorna Train Station or Milan's Central Train Station. The journey takes 40-60 minutes and costs approximately 11 euros. Please refer to train schedules below when choosing your gateway city.

RAIL INFORMATION

Approximate travel times for train travel to Santa Margherita Ligure from various Italian cities are as follows: from Genoa: 30 minutes-1 hour; from Milan: 2½-3 hours; from Pisa: 2-2½ hours; from Florence: 3-4 hours; from Rome: 4½-5½ hours; from Venice: 5½-6 hours. Please note: the above travel times are dependent upon train type and speed. Additionally, some of these journeys require station changes. For further rail information including reservations, schedules, and up-to-date fares, please contact either Rail Europe at 800.622.8600 or raileurope.com, or Trenitalia at trenitalia.com (Trenitalia operates most train services in Italy).

PRE-TOUR ACCOMMODATIONS

If you are not reserving our optional Flight + Tour Combo, you may wish to stay at the Hotel Metropole, the meeting point and the tour's first hotel, in order to avoid moving. To reserve a room, please contact the hotel directly, indicating that you are with the Country Walkers group, and refer to the date prior to your tour's start date. Offer your credit-card number as a guarantee when making the reservation, and request a written confirmation. The hotel staff speaks English, so you should not have a problem communicating with them. We suggest making a hotel reservation as soon as possible.

Hotel Metropole

Via Pagana, 2
Santa Margherita Ligure, Italy
Tel 011 39 0185 286134
Fax 011 39 0185 283495
Email hotel.metropole@metropole.it
metropole.it

Approximate room rates are seasonal and include tax and breakfast: Double for single use: from 160 euros; Double: from 190 euros.

DELAYS AND LATE ARRIVALS

If you are delayed or miss the scheduled group meeting point for any reason, we kindly request that you contact our emergency assistance provider, One Call International. This service is available 24 hours/day, 7 days/week to assist you with any type of travel delay. Please refer to the Emergency Contact details on your Tour Itinerary Overview page for One Call International contact details.

TOUR DEPARTURE POINT AND TIME

Hotel Balestri, Florence, Italy, 12:00 p.m.

Depending on your destination, it may not be possible to depart Italy for the U.S. on the last day of the tour. Please check airline schedules carefully. If you plan to schedule return flights immediately following the tour's conclusion, please call your airline directly for specific check-in requirements.

Approximate travel times for train travel from Florence to various Italian cities are as follows: to Milan: 1¾-2 hours; to Pisa: 1-1¼ hours; to Rome: 1½ hours. Please note, these travel times are dependent upon train type and speed.

Information & Policies

GUARANTEED DEPARTURES

Country Walkers guarantees the departure of every tour*—no exceptions and no disappointments! From the moment you make your deposit, you can start preparing for your adventure. We take care of all the details to ensure a seamless, small-group experience (with an average of 6 or 7 guests per guide). For best availability, reserve your trip today!

**except in cases of force majeure*

RESERVATIONS

Reservations for this tour may be made by calling Country Walkers at 800.464.9255. We can confirm your reservation with a deposit of \$350 per person. Final tour cost is due 90 days prior to tour departure date. As arrangements are confirmed at least a year in advance, the tour price is subject to change.

GUEST RESPONSIBILITIES

Each guest has the responsibility to select a trip appropriate to his/her abilities and interests and to prepare for the trip by carefully reading the confirmation materials. To join this trip, you must be in good health and capable of completing activities as described in the day-to-day itinerary. Our in-house experts welcome the opportunity to discuss the tour in more detail. In order to meet your needs, we ask that you please share any relevant physical limitations or health conditions when you make your reservation.

CANCELLATION POLICY

Cancellations received 91 days or more prior to the tour start date will incur a loss of \$150; cancellations received between 90 and 61 days prior to the tour start date incur a loss of 25 percent of the tour price; there are no refunds within 60 days of the tour start date. Up to 91 days prior to departure, you may transfer your reservation, depending on availability, from one departure to another in the same calendar year at no cost*. Please notify us in writing.

**One transfer per year; afterwards a modest per person transfer fee will apply. Please note that tours with seasonal prices may involve a higher price.*

Italy at a Glance

ENTRY REQUIREMENTS

U.S. citizens: Passports are required and must be valid for at least three months beyond the dates of travel. Visas are not required for stays of up to 90 days. For more information, see travel.state.gov.



CURRENCY

Italy uses the euro (EUR). For current exchange rates, visit oanda.com.

Many businesses in Europe will no longer accept credit cards without PIN numbers (chip and pin cards). Always contact your bank or your credit-card company for details on fees and card use when traveling.

Travel Tip

Have a variety of options to start your trip: ATM card(s), credit card(s), some dollars to exchange, and some euros in small denominations.

TIME ZONE

Italy is in the Central European Time Zone, Eastern Standard Time plus 6 hours. For more information on worldwide time zones, see: worldtimezone.com.

PHONE & INTERNET

Italy country code: +39

Cell phone coverage throughout Italy is extensive, but cannot be guaranteed to be accessible on all American mobile carriers or to function at all times while on the trail or in remote areas. For more information regarding international phone use, please refer to countrywalkers.com/phones.



Internet access is generally very good in towns and villages; however, it is not guaranteed at all of the hotels used on the tour. For more details regarding Wi-Fi availability, please refer to the Tour Itinerary Overview.

LANGUAGE

Italian is Italy's official language.

While knowledge of the local language is not necessary, you may want to learn some fun and useful phrases; see bbc.co.uk/languages/italian or the enclosed Reading Guide for a suggested phrase book.

Travel Tip

- Bringing your own hair dryer or other electrical device? You'll need a travel converter, available at most hardware, travel, or consumer electronic stores.
- For laptops or an electronic device with a dual voltage switch, you'll need the adapter plug but not a converter.

ELECTRICITY

Alternating current of 220V and 50Hz is used in Italy. Plugs have two round prongs. For a full listing of electrical outlets worldwide, see electricaloutlet.org

WEATHER

Italy has a range of climates, depending on the region. In general, spring and fall are ideal for an active vacation, with daytime temperatures in the 60s to low 70s, evenings in the 50s, and occasional short rain showers.

In the northern Alpine areas, summer through early fall is an optimal time to travel. Springtime brings wildflowers, long days, and, on the table, early tender vegetables such as asparagus and artichokes. By late summer and fall, the warm days continue with highs in the low 80s, landscapes take on a golden hue as the grape harvest gets underway, and autumn specialties appear, such as mushrooms and truffles.

For up-to-date forecasts, see qwikcast.com. For historical average temperatures and rainfall, see weatherbase.com.

ITALIAN CUISINE & WINE



Considered one of the world's finest cuisines, Italian food is undoubtedly one of the best things about traveling in Italy. Based on fresh local ingredients, Italian cooking is consequently very regional.

Northern Italy is the home of risotto, polenta, and slow-cooked meat dishes such as *osso bucco*. The cuisine of Tuscany and Umbria in central Italy also features meat and game dishes, such as *bistecca alla fiorentina* (Florentine steak), sausages, and roast pork, as well as vegetable- and bread-based dishes such as savory bruschetta, *ribollita* (vegetable soup), and *panzanella* (bread salad).

Southern Italy and Sicily are justly known for fresh seafood—spaghetti with tiny clams, or a main course of swordfish braised in a light tomato sauce—and fresh vegetables are also prominent— spaghetti with zucchini, or the well-known *insalata caprese* of tomatoes, basil, and fresh mozzarella cheese.

Meals in Italy typically have several courses, starting with an *antipasto* (an appetizer); then a *primo* (first course), which is usually pasta or risotto; a *secondo* (main course), which is a meat or fish dish; and *dolce* (dessert).

Wine has been produced in Italy for millennia, and the country's climate and geography of coastline, foothills, and mountains allow grape growing in 20 regions from the Alps in the north to southernmost Sicily. Restaurants feature their regions' local wine.

Please see the detailed itinerary for region-specific sample menus, local delicacies, and wines.

LIFE IN ITALY

Shopping hours

Shops and stores are generally open Monday to Saturday between 9:30 a.m. and 12:30 p.m., and from 3:30 to 7:30 p.m.; department stores and supermarkets are open all day from 9:30 a.m. to 7:30 p.m. Open-air markets generally open from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m., although in larger cities such as Florence, open-air markets are typically open all day, even on Sundays.

Meal times

Breakfast is served at hotels from 7:00 a.m. to 10:00 or 10:30 a.m. Lunch is served in restaurants from 12:30 to 2:30 p.m. and dinner is usually served from 7:30 to 11:00 p.m. (Restaurant meal times may vary by region, trending from earlier to later as you travel from north to south.)

Travel Tip

Coffee is served throughout the day in its many different ways. Italians tend to drink *caffè latte* or cappuccino until about 11:00 a.m. (a *latte* is a cup of hot milk). After 11:00 a.m., they usually drink *un caffè* (espresso). If you'd like it with a little milk you should order a *macchiato*. You'll need to specify if you want it *con latte caldo* (with hot milk), or *con latte freddo* (with cold milk), or *con schiuma* (with foam). Lastly, there's no charge to stand at the bar with a drink, but a small fee is added to the bill when you sit at a café table.



Travel Tip

Most restaurants have a “cover charge” or *il coperto*, a per-person fee of one to three euros that is added to your final bill. It is a legitimate practice and it is considered the “fee” for the place setting, the bread, tap water (which is fine to drink), and breadsticks.

Tipping

Tipping in restaurants is not compulsory in Italy. In restaurants the menu or bill indicates *servizio incluso*, meaning “service is included.” However, locals tend to leave a small amount in coins after a meal or a coffee—roughly one to two percent of the total, or one to two euros for a meal of up to 50 euros. For a coffee or a drink in a bar or café, 20 to 50 euro cents is appropriate.

Taxi drivers aren’t generally tipped, but you could round up the total, letting the driver keep the change.

For luggage assistance, a small tip of one to three euros is appropriate.

TRAVEL RESOURCES

National Italian tourist board official sites

italia.it and enit.it

Italian public holidays

To assist in travel planning, it may be helpful to be aware of Italian public holidays, festivals, or calendars of events. Visit the Italian tourist board’s website noted above, then click on Useful Information, More Information, and National Public Holidays. For local events, visit the regional tourism websites (links can be found on the region’s page on italia.it, in the Discover Italy section).

Travel Tip

Be aware that you may need to validate your train ticket by “punching” it before boarding, using a small machine located on the train platform, which stamps the time and date on it.

TRAVEL IN ITALY

Trains

Trenitalia: trenitalia.it (Italy’s national train company)

Raileurope: raileurope.com or 800.622.8600, a U.S.-based company that provides schedules, reservations, and ticketing for all European train networks (their multi-day/-week/-month passes in one country or combinations of countries may be an economical and convenient choice for European train travel.)



Other local transportation

In addition to its excellent rail network, Italy also has several regional airlines, many regional bus lines, and, in coastal and lake regions, local ferries. Taxis are available at all major airports, train stations, and in smaller towns, and can be reserved in advance (your hotel can usually provide assistance).

Most major car rental agencies are available at Italian airports and train stations. For more information contact Country Walkers, or go to italia.it, and click on “Useful Information.” For driving, you can further navigate to “Rules to drive in Italy.”

Museum information and online reservations

tickitaly.com

Packing List

PACKING TIPS

Pack light! Keep in mind there will be times you may have to carry your own luggage short distances, especially before and after your Country Walkers tour. Due to space constraints, we require you to limit your luggage to one medium piece (approximately 18x15x29 inches or 8,000 cu. in.) and one small carry-on, per person. We recommend packing any personal necessities, medications, your hotel itinerary/emergency contact information, your hiking boots (or shoes), and extra clothes in your carry-on luggage in the event that your baggage is delayed. We suggest leaving valuable jewelry at home. A copy of your passport or other important documents should be kept in a separate area of your luggage. Always be alert when carrying a purse, camera, money belt, or backpack in busy cities, airports, and train stations.

FOOTWEAR

- » Hiking boots or shoes. There are many brands to choose from. Proper fit is crucial, so try on new boots or shoes while wearing socks you plan to use on tour. Be sure to break in new footwear well before your tour begins. By the time you're ready to join your walking tour, you should be able to complete 3-5 miles of walking without discomfort. We require lightweight boots or shoes with proper ankle support and good tread to ensure stability on all types of terrain. Waterproof footwear keeps feet dry in heavy rain and water resistant footwear keeps feet dry in heavy dew. Country Walkers reserves the right to deny participation to any guest not wearing appropriate footwear.
- » Comfortable shoes for evening strolls on uneven, cobblestone streets
- » Synthetic, moisture-wicking socks (cotton socks are not recommended for walking as they will quickly cause blisters)
- » Blister remedy

CLOTHING

- » Lightweight, wash-and-wear long pants
- » Long-sleeved, wash-and-wear shirt
- » T-shirts and shorts
- » Polar fleece or light wool pullover (it will keep you warm even when wet)

- » Dinner attire: dress is smart casual
- » Light jacket or sweater for evening strolls and alfresco dining
- » Church attire: exposed shoulders and knees are not permitted when visiting most churches in Italy. Men may wear long Bermuda-style shorts (to the knee) and women may wear longer skirts (to the knee). Convertible zip-off pants are a good option for both men and women on days that combine hiking and church visits. Women may carry a light scarf, shawl, or jacket to cover bare shoulders and upper arms when needed.

OUTERWEAR

- » Waterproof rain gear: jacket, pants, hat, or hood
- » Windbreaker with hood (your rain gear may be suitable)
- » Hat with a broad brim or visor

EQUIPMENT

- » Pack (minimum size of 25L): large enough to carry water, extra clothing, rain gear, and personal items (camera, etc.)
- » Waterproof cover for pack
- » Water bottle, canteen, or CamelBak-type water reservoir or hydration pack to carry your own water while walking (equivalent of 1-2 liters)
- » Sunblock and lip balm
- » Insect repellent
- » Sunglasses
- » Toilet kit for when facilities are not available on the walks. Include zip-lock baggies, tissues, and moist towelettes, which can be disposed of upon return to the hotel.
- » Personal first-aid kit including any medications you ordinarily take (in their original container)

OPTIONAL

- » Telescopic walking sticks. (Please note that while telescopic walking sticks are highly recommended for this tour, they are not provided by Country Walkers. Therefore please plan on bringing your own should you wish to use them.)
- » Binoculars

- » Bathing suit and towel for optional swimming in the sea
- » Flip flops or water sandals
- » Camera and charger and/or extra batteries
- » Zip-lock bags (to keep camera and valuables dry)
- » Small notebook and pen
- » Field guides (see enclosed reading list)
- » Folding umbrella
- » Bandana
- » Washcloth (many European hotels do not provide them)
- » Hand sanitizer and/or moist towelettes
- » Motion sickness bracelets or other non-sleep-inducing remedy for short boat rides
- » Alarm clock (not all hotels have alarm clocks or provide wake-up calls)