

France & Italy: Nice to Genoa

Tour-Only Itinerary

Discover the Riviera Ponente —the “sunset coast”—a walker’s paradise of enchanting hillside villages. On this endlessly rewarding walking tour, Nice, France kicks off discoveries that stretch to Genoa, Italy. This is a world of unvarnished beauty committed to simple living and exemplary “slow food.” You’ll follow coastal trails shaded by palms and pines to magnificent villas, castle ruins and manicured gardens, and hike ancient Roman routes amid the soaring Ligurian and Maritime Alps. Along the way, connect with those who thrive off this fertile land: olive oil and wine makers, agriturismo and trattoria owners, and a family who cultivates the medieval-era chinotto fruit. And indulge in the centerpiece of your journey: three nights at an elegant beachfront resort designed in the grandest tradition.



Highlights

- Trace a seaside trail past elegant villas and secret coves on stunning Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat.
- Wander the narrow streets—or caruggi—of Italy’s “most beautiful villages,” including Dolceacqua, immortalized on canvas by Claude Monet.
- Climb “the balconies of the Côte d’Azur” to the village of Roquebrune and tour its 10th-century castle, with sweeping Mediterranean views.
- Enjoy a walking tour of historic Genoa, capping off your discoveries at a noble palace with pesto, focaccia, and crisp vino bianco.

On all Guided Adventures you can count on ...



Expert local guides to introduce you to the best of your destination.



Gracious accommodations that are a clean, comfortable home away from home.



Off-the-beaten-path places you'd never find on your own.



Experts to handle all the details.



A maximum of 18 fun-loving fellow travelers to share the journey.



Flight + Tour Combos include plane tickets, airport car service, and pre- and post-tour accommodations.



Delicious, authentic multi-course meals—virtually all are included.

Activity Level

This tour is one of our Guided Walking Adventures. It is rated easy to moderate, with an average of 3 to 6 miles per day, with options on some days. There are some ascents and descents, with climbing time on the ascents ranging from about 15 to 40 minutes (and maximum altitude gain and loss of approximately 1,000 feet). The terrain varies from paved and cobblestone streets or seaside promenades (during organized city tours and other easy village explorations) to gravel roads and uneven, single-track hiking trails with loose stones or gravel, rocks, and roots. Some trails are exposed to the sun making the level of difficulty more challenging during warmer weather. A combination of local rail transportation and a

dedicated driver with vans or coach is provided on this tour.

DAY 1

Join your France & Italy: Nice to Genoa tour. Travel to Menton

Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat; 4-6 miles, easy to moderate

Your guides meet you at 8:30 a.m. in the lobby of Hotel Masséna in Nice, France. They'll be wearing Country Walkers shirts. Please be dressed for walking. Hiking shoes are required.

Travel this morning to Saint-Jean-Cap-Ferrat for a stunning coastal walk. This scenic wooded peninsula reaching out into the Mediterranean Sea has hosted celebrities and diplomats since the 1950s. But you leave the jet-set behind for a spectacular stroll along the *Sentier Littoral* (Coastal Path), a trail that skirts a rocky landscape, and affords splendid ocean vistas. Along the way, you pass an old quarry that was mined to build parts of Monaco, gaze at sun-bleached limestone dramatically set against bright blue water, and admire sparkling coves. Be on the lookout for serene sailboats skimming along the ocean and glimpse the graceful balconies of the grand Belle Epoque manses set amidst these fragrant pine forests. Your footpath begins in the shade of lush foliage and pine, catching peeks of the bright pink bougainvillea of the town of Villefranche-Sur-Mer. The invigorating seaside walk culminates at a local restaurant, where your efforts are rewarded with a lunch of delicious local fish and seasonal vegetables, topped off with a decadent chocolate dessert. (An optional loop around the harbor is offered, time- and weather-permitting.)

Afterward, pop over to the nearby Villa Ephrussi, a palatial hilltop home once owned by the Baroness Ephrussi de Rothschild, where you take time to stroll the beautifully manicured gardens and peruse the massive art collection, admiring the 18th-century paintings, antique furniture, and Flemish tapestries.

Your journey (via minibus) to the relaxed town of Menton, straddling the Côte d'Azur on the Italian border. Nicknamed the "Pearl of France," this charming old town enchants, with its cobbled lanes shaded by citrus trees and a rich canvas of remarkably preserved 13th-century mansions and lovely pastel-hued houses. Bathed in sunlight most days, this is the warmest part of France, enjoying its own near-subtropical climate and a rich array of cultural institutions—museums, galleries, gardens and an ancient monastery.

After settling in at your comfortable hotel, gather this evening with your guides for an *aperitif* and orientation meeting. Then, savor a dinner of outstanding Mediterranean cuisine. Your menu varies by what's fresh and available. You might enjoy fresh-caught St. Pierre (or John Dory fish), or rack of lamb in a pistachio crust. Your meal is sourced locally and from this Alpes-Maritimes region of France. A crisp local white wine or hearty red will complement every bite. For dessert, sample the region's artisanal sorbet or gelato.

Included Meals: Lunch, Dinner

DAY 2

Roquebrune-Cap-Martin. Independent exploration of Menton

5-7 miles, easy to moderate, 850-ft. elevation gain and loss

You awaken to the smell of *café au lait* (coffee with steamed milk). A typical French breakfast of cheeses, yogurt, cereals, juices, pastries, bread, and fresh fruit fuels you up for the morning's exploration. Your morning destination is the nearby Roquebrune-Cap-Martin, nestled between Menton and the glitzy city-state of Monaco. You follow a relatively unspoiled path, skirting the peninsula and marveling at more Mediterranean views. As you climb the hundreds of steps to the village, you will understand why this trail is called the "Balcony of the Côte d'Azur." On higher ground, you arrive in Roquebrune, a sleepy medieval village watched over by a 10th-century castle. Be sure to find your way to the Place du Capitaine Vincent for splendid panoramas of the sea and Monaco. Visit its castle—the central tower is said to be the oldest in France—and see the other pride of the village: a 1,000-year-old olive tree. Your morning is rewarded with a delicious lunch served al fresco (weather permitting).

After, return to Menton along an easier path that gradually descends to town, or hop on the minibus for a ride to the hotel. This afternoon, you have options for further walking and exploration. First, enjoy a self-guided walk along another section of the *Sentier Littoral*. This scenic route is part of the old *Sentier des Douaniers*—or Customs Path. Established in 1791 during the Revolution, it was traveled by emperors and smugglers alike. Pause at stunning beaches as you go, including the magnificent Plage Buse.

Or perhaps visit two jewels of local architecture that serve as a dramatic study in contrasts—Le Corbusier's log-cabin Cabanon (part of a UNESCO World Heritage site) and Eileen Gray's seaside modernist villa known as "E-1027" (listed as a French Historic Monument). To reach these historic

properties, follow the Sentier Littoral to the section known as the Promenade Le Corbusier. Reservations are required in order to tour. (For further information, visit capmoderne.monuments-nationaux.fr/)

Alternately, spend time exploring the treasures of Menton. Browse the fascinating collection of the Jean Cocteau Museum, a chronicle of the writer-filmmaker's works. Stroll the magnificent villa and gardens of Les Colombières, perched in the hills above town. Or explore the Jardin Botanique Val Rahmeh, a lush botanical garden of exotic species and palm-lined pathways.

Dinner is on your own this evening. You'll find that Menton offers a bounty of choices, including Mirazur, the restaurant rated #1 in the world in 2019 by the "World's 50 Best" committee. If you plan to dine here, reservations are required well in advance.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 3

Val Nervia: Dolceacqua, Isolabona, Apricale, and Perinaldo. Travel to Alassio

2-3 miles, easy to moderate, 500-ft. elevation gain and 1-2 miles, easy

Bid farewell to France this morning as you prepare for today's walk in the hills of the tranquil Val Nervia. Begin the day with a border crossing into Italy. Then you lace up your shoes for some of the most beautiful walks you'll ever take.

You explore a stunning quartet of Italian villages today. Stop first at Dolceacqua ("sugar water"). Rated one of "the most beautiful villages of Italy," this magical hamlet straddling the River Nervia was immortalized by impressionist painter Claude Monet when he stayed in nearby Bordighera in 1884. What captivated Monet most was the village's graceful, arched 15th-century bridge, the Ponte Vecchio. It's sure to captivate you, too! You might wish to sample the traditional Dolceacqua cookie, the *michette*, before continuing on to Isolabona and your trailhead.

This morning's hike route brings you through Isolabona's cobbled passageways and gently ascends along a single track past wild fennel, fig, olive, mulberry, and oak trees; the village of Apricale (meaning "exposed to the sun"), impossibly scenic (and sunny!) rises from the forested hills in front of you. Once an

important stronghold of Liguria, it enjoys status as one of the “most beautiful villages of Italy.” Meander past the old *lavatoio* (communal washhouse) and climb through its maze of winding alleyways (or *caruggi*).

Continue on (via mini van) to lunch at a special *agriturismo*, or farm estate, nearby. You receive a warm welcome at this working farm, and savor a well-deserved lunch perhaps beginning with *pizzetta frita alla Ligure* (mini pizzas Ligurian style), and followed with a dish of homemade ravioli with pesto, accompanied by a glass of the locally produced, ruby-red Rossese wine.

After lunch, explore nearby Perinaldo. Dating to the 11th century, and built on the ruins of an ancient fortress, this pretty village is the birthplace of renowned astronomers Cassini and Maraldi and has a long tradition of the cultivation of the *taggiasca* olive, a unique tree that was introduced by Minor friars of Saint Francis in the 1600s. Journey next to Alassio, a sleepy seaside town with a long sandy beach where a stylish seafront hotel (and an *aperitivo!*) await. Tonight, dinner is on your own; your guides will have plenty of recommendations.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 4

Gazzelli to Chiusanico circuit

5 miles, easy to moderate

After a fabulous breakfast, depart Alassio for the hills below Monte Guardiabella and the Ligurian Alps. Today you take an invigorating hike through history, tracing the paths of ancient Romans and even those who came here before them. Your trail links the towns of Gazzelli and Chiusanico, renowned for their olive oils and wines. Pass through chestnut and oak woods, skirting groves of olive trees and vineyards, and dotted with wildflowers and poppies in springtime. Throughout this beautiful walk, you enjoy fabulous vistas of the surrounding perched villages and Monte Guardiabella in the distance.

Pause for lunch today at a family restaurant and wine estate. The *menu del giorno* always features fresh and delicious seasonal and local fare: Perhaps dine on homemade tagliolini (local pasta) with artichokes or gnocchi with speck (ham) and saffron; quiche with sausage and leeks; zucchini, basil and onion fritters (or *frittelle*). For dessert, indulge in a delectable olive oil *torta* or freshly baked fruit *crostata*.

After lunch, stroll just down the hill to visit an olive oil museum. During a fascinating tour, you learn about olive oil production, both past and present, and about the history of the olive oil export industry. Return to Alassio late this afternoon, where you can relax and enjoy another evening on your own for dinner.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Lunch

DAY 5

The Roman Way: Albenga to Alassio

4 miles, easy

Begin today with a short train ride to Albenga, nicknamed the “city of a hundred spires.” Albenga has done a good job to preserve its ancient Roman architecture and boasts a series of impressive medieval towers. Wind your way through the narrow alleys and visit a stunning chapel and the beautifully maintained 5th century Baptistry, the city’s gem. After time to explore, leave the old city behind as you climb along the ancient Roman Way, also known as the Via Julia Augusta. Opened by Emperor Augustus in 13 A.D., this road was built to link the Po Valley to Gaul and Spain. While some sections are now dirt or even paved, short sections still include the original stones. Along the way, pass a number of funerary enclosures, ancient family tombs, and sweeping views of the coast and Gallinara Island.

On your return to Alassio, enjoy an independent lunch at one of the many seafront eateries or at one of the popular *focaccerias* or pizzerias. After, perhaps take a swim at the sandy beach, or explore the many shops and galleries in town. You might want to pop into one of the traditional *pasticcerias* to sample the local confection, *baci di Alassio*, dark chocolate ganache between two hazelnut and cocoa biscuits as you stroll! Later, join your fellow travelers for another memorable meal of local specialties at the hotel’s elegant restaurant.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 6

Borgio Verezzi and Finalborgo. Travel to Genoa

5 miles, easy to moderate, 800-ft. elevation gain and loss

Savor a final breakfast at your seafront hotel. Then you journey to the Riviera delle Palme, stretching

between Alassio and Savona. Named for the thousands of palm trees lining its sandy beaches, this former consular route was built to connect ancient Rome and France. As you stroll this scenic byway, more astonishing Mediterranean coast unfolds before you. Pass through Verezzi en route. This charming hillside village actually comprises four smaller villages, while Verezzi itself is also half of the larger village of Borgio Verezzi, with Borgio enjoying a location on the sea. Admire the enchanting cobbled lanes, white terraces and small houses leaning on each other.

Enjoy a final independent lunch today in one of the local villages—Finalborgo, Crosa, Verezzi, or Borgio, depending on your timing. After, reconvene as a group to learn about the exotic *chinotto*, the oldest surviving medieval fruit, at a local purveyor in Finalborgo. The fruit originated in China and provides many health benefits. You'll learn about them as you sample a homemade sweet.

Late afternoon, you travel to your final destination, Genoa. Known as La Superba—the Superb One—to locals, this coastal gem ruled over the mightiest maritime empire in medieval Europe. Today, as the capital of Liguria, it is an underrated treasure—many layered and wholly authentic. Your hotel is said to be the oldest in Italy, a Belle Arte jewel in an ornate 19th-century building. Settle in and relax before gathering for a memorable farewell dinner. Your fresh and creatively prepared meal might start with a famous *pasta fresca*, made with the world-renowned pesto. Move on to Santa Margherita shrimps in saffron sauce, or perhaps the *pansotto* Genovese. Or, it may be a *fritto misto* of the catch of the day. Whatever is on the menu, it will give you another reason to toast your discoveries along the French and Italian Rivas.

Included Meals: Breakfast, Dinner

DAY 7

Your France & Italy: Nice to Genoa tour concludes

Awake to a bountiful Genovese breakfast. Then leave the hotel on foot for a walking tour of some of the city highlights. A lucrative and powerful maritime past enriched Genoa during the Middle Ages. Much of its art and architecture from the era remains, including more than 100 palazzi (palaces) dating to the 16th and 17th centuries. Your tour culminates at one of them, where you sample freshly baked focaccia with pesto and a glass of crisp white wine.

Back at the hotel (by approximately 1:00 p.m.), your *France & Italy: Nice to Genoa* tour concludes in time for you to seek out lunch on your own. Make connections for onward travel, or continue your independent

exploration of Genoa.

Included Meals: Breakfast

What's Included

Tour Only

Exceptional boutique accommodations	✓
13 on-tour meals: 6 breakfasts, 4 lunches, 3 dinners	✓
Local guides with you throughout tour	✓
Local wine and/or beer with dinner	✓
Entrance fees and special events as noted in the itinerary	✓
Telescopic walking sticks provided on tour	✓