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Italy: Portofino & Cinque Terre - Flight + Tour Combo

Travel Style - Guided Walking Tour

This small-group Guided Walking Adventure offers an authentic travel experience, one that takes you away from the crowds and deep into 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.



Along the mild and marvelous Ligurian Riviera—where wooden fishing boats bob beside candy-colored waterfronts—the legendary Cinque Terre, Italy's "five lands," has beguiled travelers since the days of Dante. In this region of fragrant *macchia*, crooked medieval streets, peaceful terraced gardens, and ancient stone steps, you'll walk from hillside grape arbors to ancient village ports, following undulating trails through lemon and olive groves. Among rugged landscapes and pastel-hued villages, you'll walk into the soul of Italy—accessible only by train, boat, or foot—where the peal of bell towers gives way to the wild chorus of evening cicadas, and small boats chug out to sea by lantern light. Your rewarding adventure is made more rich by scenic walks in and around jet-setting Portofino and along the medieval ramparts of Lucca, a stunningly preserved Tuscan treasure. With a year-round temperate climate, the Cinque Terre offers a sensuous experience unlike any in Italy.

Flight + Tour Combo Itinerary - 2019

Flight

Overnight Flight from USA to Florence, Italy

Begin your adventure by departing from a convenient gateway city in the United States or Canada. Spend the first night aloft.

Arrival

Arrive in Florence, Italy

Upon arrival at Florence's Peretola (formally known as Amerigo Vespucci) Airport, a representative holding a Country Walkers sign meets you as you exit the baggage-claim area. Please note that there may be up to a 45-minute wait if there are other guests arriving within the same time frame. A complimentary small-group transfer is provided to your city center hotel approximately 30 minutes



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away. The remainder of the day is at your leisure (no meals included).

Accommodation: Hotel Balestri (or equivalent), Florence

Hotel Balestri is a sophisticated, four-star boutique hotel overlooking the Arno River. This recently renovated historic property is conveniently located in the historic center and just a 5-minute walk from the Uffizi Gallery and the Ponte Vecchio bridge.

Day 1

Join your Country Walkers *Italy: Portofino & Cinque Terre* tour

Breakfast is included at your hotel.

You meet your guides and fellow travelers this morning in Florence and transfer to Lucca, a stunningly preserved Tuscan town surrounded by remarkably intact medieval walls. Henry James famously described this treasure as “overflowing with everything.” During its Renaissance heyday, Lucca grew rich on the supply and production of silk. On arrival, you embark on a walking tour of the town’s charming cobbled streets, its handsome piazzas and along its majestic fortified city walls that today host a park-like promenade for residents and visitors. You pause at a locally favored restaurant for a delicious welcome lunch of handmade pasta and salads before continuing to the Roman-Byzantine town of Portovenere, a UNESCO World Heritage site. This charming city enjoys a spectacular setting between the azure sea and the nearby Apua Alps. It tall, narrow pastel-hued houses strike a colorful pose along an inviting waterfront promenade. Perhaps the town’s most dramatic site is the San Pietro Gothic church, a 13th-century gem adorned in black and white stripes typical of its day. Perched high on a rocky cape overlooking the sea, it has long been a beloved landmark overlooking the spectacular Golfo dei Poeti (Gulf of the Poets). The gulf is so named because many writers, including Dante, Petrarch, Byron, and Shelley, have sung its praises—even the boats in the harbor sport romantic names inspired by these poets. Upon arrival, you settle in to your hotel and rejoin your group for a scenic boat ride in the gulf, concluding your adventure with a sumptuous feast of freshly caught seafood.

Accommodation: 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 2

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



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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 a more challenging dirt trail returns you to the hamlet of Terrizzo, where your boat is waiting. Time and weather permitting, you cruise 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, enjoy another delicious meal featuring the bounty of the region.

Accommodation: 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 3

Campiglia to Telegrafo via San Antonio

2 miles, easy to moderate. Telegrafo to Riomaggiore; 3 miles, moderate to challenging, 1,475-ft elevation gain and loss

This morning a short transfer brings you to the town of Campiglia. Situated on the ridge of the western promontory of the Gulf of La Spezia, (at approximately 1,200 feet above the sea), it is also the starting point for the Cinque Terre National Park trails linking Portovenere to Monterosso. 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 footpaths, allowing you to customize your walking experience over the next few days. With breathtaking panoramas over the islands of Palmaria and Tino and across the coast, Campiglia also features a 14th-century church and an ancient windmill (located just outside the village). Descending from the village, your trail traces an easy track through cork oak trees, and along undulating terrain until you reach S. Antonio. After another half hour, you reach Telegrafo, from where an optional walk continues to Riomaggiore.



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Enjoy lunch on your own in Riomaggiore, the southernmost town—recognizable by its characteristic tower homes—or in Manarola, a cozy, classic seaside town and the center of Cinque Terre's wine production. Afterward, you reunite with the group to travel by train to Monterosso—time and energy permitting—perhaps stopping en route to visit another Cinque Terre village.

On arrival to Monterosso, you walk the short distance to your home-away-from-home, located just steps away from the best beach in town. After settling in to your room and freshening up, you gather for a delicious dinner of locally caught seafood accompanied by a glass of *vermentino* from a nearby vineyard.

Accommodation: Hotel Palme, Monterosso al Mare

Just a short walk from Monterosso's public beach, this small and simple hotel can be found in a quiet setting by the sea. Hotel Palme is known for its comfortable rooms, peaceful patio and lovely garden shaded by palm trees.

Day 4

Monterosso to Vernazza

2.5 miles, moderate to challenging, 700-ft. elevation gain and loss

After breakfast, perhaps enjoyed on the outdoor terrace, you set off on a stunning trail to nearby Vernazza, one of the most charming towns in the Cinque Terre, accessible by boat, rail, or trail. Arguably the most spectacular trail through the picturesque "Five Lands," you trace a well-established footpath offering views of the turquoise sea. After an initial lengthy climb up a steep cliffside stairway of several hundred steps, 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. *(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.)*

A special meal rewards your efforts and refuels you for some time of independent exploration.. Late afternoon you transfer via minibus to a seaside resort and your home for the final three nights of the tour. After settling in to your room and time to refresh, you gather for another delicious meal of typical Ligurian specialties, complemented by the region's crisp white wine.

Accommodation: 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.



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Day 5

Santa Margherita Ligure to Portofino

5 miles, easy to moderate, 885-ft. elevation gain and loss

This morning you linger over a leisurely breakfast and cappuccino at your elegant seaside resort accommodations. Departing from your hotel on foot, you enjoy a scenic walk to the chic resort of Portofino. Your trail traces the seaside promenade and climbs above town. 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, cobbled 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. After a tasty lunch, 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 *paciugo*—a heavenly cup of strawberry and vanilla *gelato* (Italian ice cream) topped with fresh berries and cream. There is also 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, where the Portofino lighthouse is perched on the Punto del Capo.

You return to Santa Margherita via a 20-minute ferry or bus ride (time- and weather-dependent) and enjoy dinner on your own (with recommendations from your guides).

Accommodation: Hotel Metropole, Santa Margherita Ligure



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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 6

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. Here, you enter the Regional Park of Portofino for an approximately 4-hour morning walk. Your initial 45-minute, 500-foot undulating yet steady ascent along a shady trail is punctuated by a series of rough steps. Along the spectacular ridgeline trail, enjoy commanding views 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 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, San Fruttuoso 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 farewell feast 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).

Accommodation: 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.



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Day 7

Your Country Walkers *Italy: Portofino & Cinque Terre* tour concludes

After enjoying breakfast, a complimentary small-group transfer brings you to the Grand Hotel Savoia in Genoa for your post-tour night. (Lunch and dinner are on your own.)

Accommodation: Grand Hotel Savoia, Genoa

An elegant turn-of-the-century palazzo in the center of Genoa, the Grand Hotel Savoia is perfectly situated for travelers hoping to make the most of Genoa's Old Town. This five-star accommodation combines classic elegance and countless modern amenities, including free Wi-Fi, a chic spa and fitness center, and an excellent concierge.

Departure

Ciao! This morning, a complimentary small-group transfer is provided to Genoa's Cristoforo Colombo Airport, based on your departure time. (Departure time will be communicated to you by your guides on tour.)