

15
coastal
routes
in Liguria

In these places beside the sea



San Remo, Bordighera, Alassio, Albenga, Varigotti, Finale Ligure, Spotorno, Bergeggi... and more still Portofino, Santa Margherita, Sestri Levante, Monterosso, Portovenere.

It sounds like a nursery rhyme, but instead it is a list, and only an approximate one, moreover, of the most famous resorts along the Ligurian Riviera. Towns that have preserved the vestiges and traditions of their history.

So much so that the visitor can admire, at almost every step, walking through the maze of narrow alleyways, amazing buildings, impressive churches or cathedrals and quiet squares, climbing up, finally to the old fortresses that were once indispensable, as were the many watch-towers, to protect the inhabitants from marauding pirates and from the attacks of enemy fleets.

Traditions have many expressions, starting from the culinary one that brings to the table the flavours of the sea. A fresh, wholesome flavour, that the true connoisseur hardly dares change: in fact, the most delicious recipes are really the simplest ones, leaving the true flavour of the very fresh catch almost intact.

The world of the Ligurian Riviera is relaxing and authentic; a world where you can combine educational routes with the relaxation and fun of a seaside holiday: pebble or sandy beaches, always perfectly equipped for sun and sea bathing.

Every kind of sport can be practiced in these seaside resorts: from fishing to diving in the most beautiful sea beds of Europe, from surfing to sailing.

And for those who prefer to keep their feet on dry land, perfect golf-courses, tennis courts and football pitches are available as well as a network of sea-mountain paths for trips on foot, horse-back or mountain bike.

Without considering that winter is almost unknown in Liguria. Each season is ideal for coming here and choosing the best activity, according to one's own needs and the climate that is always mild. For example, the period between September and March may be the best time to become better acquainted with this area which, in the summer, welcomes us onto its beaches.

The car can become the best means, far from the traffic jams of summer, to move from one town to another in discovery of an area waiting to be known.

A reality made of stone and stones, history and stories, a reality to be read and understood through impressive urban layouts that appear as if cut out from a landscape that nature has returned to us, amazing and impervious at the same time, to challenge man's ingenuity in carving out spaces to set up home. Where only boredom has not found a place to live.

15 coastal routes



LEGENDA - Instructions are provided in the maps of the individual routes



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DEPARTURE
AND
ARRIVAL

in Liguria



ITINERARIES

- 1 Ventimiglia, Vallecrosia, Ospedaletti
- 2 Sanremo, among flower-growing and floral architecture
- 3 Imperia, Diano Marina, San Bartolomeo al Mare, Cervo
- 4 Andora, Laigueglia, Alassio, Albenga
- 5 Finale Ligure, Varigotti, Noli, Bergeggi
- 6 Savona
- 7 Cogoleto, Arenzano, Pegli
- 8 The town of Christopher Columbus
- 9 Genova-Nervi, Bogliasco, Pieve, Recco
- 10 The Park of Portofino, Camogli, San Fruttoso
- 11 Santa Margherita Ligure, Rapallo, Zoagli
- 12 Chiavari, Lavagna, Sestri Levante
- 13 Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, Riomaggiore
- 14 The town of La Spezia
- 15 Portovenere, Lerici, Tellaro

1 Ventimiglia, Vallecrosia, Ospedaletti

Flowers, the sea and History



The route

Departure:
Ventimiglia.

Villa Hanbury 6 km,
Balzi Rossi 9 km,
Vallecrosia 17 km,
Bordighera 19 km.

Arrival:
Ospedaletti 22 km.

Characteristics:
archaeology,
botany,
history,
art,
architecture.

A journey along the border between Italy and France, an area rich in archaeological remains, historical finds and artistic masterpieces.

Ancient places surrounded by a luxuriant and surprising vegetation, due to the special micro-climate that fosters the proliferation of exotic species.

The Roman town of Ventimiglia stretched along the right-hand bank of the Nervia, where today there are some interesting remains of the spas and the theatre (I-III century A.D.). Other Roman remains are preserved in the "Girolamo Rossi" Museum of Forte Anunziata. It was to escape from the Barbarian invasions that the inhabitants moved to the hill to the right of the Roja.

This is the area where the medieval town was built, of great historical and artistic interest: around the area of the castle we can see the Convento delle Canonichesse (XVII century), the public Palazzo, the Bishop's Palace and, in particular, the Romanesque Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, with its octagonal Baptistery, the Church of San Michele has been renovated several times: the apse, the bell-tower and the central nave date back to the Thirteenth cen-

tury. In June the "Flower Battle" is not to be missed with its floats decorated in flower mosaics and, in August, the medieval festival and the tournament with the ancient crossbow.

In 1867, due to the particular micro-climate in this area, Sir Thomas Hanbury established the wonderful Botanical Garden at Villa Hanbury, on the Capo Mortola headland. The garden has more than 4000 species of ornamental, herbal and fruit species, coming from numerous sub-tropical and Mediterranean regions. The impressive rocks of the Balzi Rossi stand out not far from Villa Hanbury. Graffiti and objects dating back to 240,000 years ago have been found in the caves that open out onto the walls, above the sea. The collection is exhibited in the nearby museum and includes thousands of finds including weapons, ornaments and tools.



Ventimiglia

To the East of Ventimiglia is Vallecrosia, of Roman origin and famous for its flower-growing and song museum which, unique in Europe, is located inside a railway carriage. The collection includes records, instruments and numerous rarities linked to the Italian song, starting from the Nineteenth century.

Bordighera was a true pearl of tourism during the *belle époque*. The town is divided into the old (founded in 1470) and the new part. The first is surrounded by ancient walls and stands over Cape Sant’Ampelio, where a fine little church is built. Modern Bordighera is surrounded by luxuriant plants and palm trees, with the elegant Argentina promenade and the wonderful Liberty-style villas. One of these is home to the Bicknell Museum and the International Institute of Ligurian Studies, with a rich collection of paleontological finds

from Liguria and the International Library. The name of Ospedaletti is said to derive from an ancient *hospitale* founded by the Knights of Saint John of Jerusalem. The particularly mild climate, thanks to the protection given by the Ligurian Alps, has made the resort’s fortune, a popular tourist destination for the international elite of the *fin de siècle*. The same climate has also fostered flower-growing and the subsequent opening of the first flower market in Europe. All you have to do to appreciate Ospedaletti is to walk along the sea front, among the intoxicating perfumes of the flower-filled gardens and the palm and eucalyptus trees.



Ospedaletti

Cubàite

A dessert typical of the far west of Liguria, between Ventimiglia, Castel Vittorio, Camposso and Pigna. It is the Riviera version of a dessert that is popular in the southern Mediterranean, called *qubbayta* in Arabic and *cubbaita* in Sicilian. It is composed of two wafers filled with a praline made from hazelnuts, walnuts or almonds, depending on the area, with orange peel and honey. The two wafers are prepared with two circular “pincers, the disks of which were once engraved so that they would print a symbol or a letter on the faces of the wafers, similarly to what happens with *corzetti*, a typical Genoese cake.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Bordighera
Ospedaletti
Ventimiglia

2 Sanremo, among flower-growing and floral architecture

Grazie dei Fiori



The route

Access:
A10 Motorway
(Sanremo West exit),
SS1 Aurelia.

Characteristics:
history,
art,
architecture,
botany.

Universally recognised as the town of the Festival, Sanremo offers the tourist and the visitor a rich and variegated reality, to be discovered and enjoyed intensely at every moment. From the medieval Pigna to the luxurious Liberty-style villas of the end of the Nineteenth century, the town offers an intriguing mixture of high society and culture, fun and good food.

In the architectural field, Sanremo, the home of flowers, is also famous for its numerous noble examples of the Liberty style, otherwise recognised as the "floral" style, due to the historical presence of an international elite tourism.

The main examples of *fin de siècle* architecture are found along the elegant Corso degli Inglesi. Villas with inviting names such as *Bel Respiro*, *Vista Lieta*, *Bel Soggiorno*, *Gioia Bella*, *Mirasole*, *Miramare*, *Primavera*, *Rondinella* evoke the carefree, hedonistic spirit of decadence. A fine example of Liberty style can be seen in the Villa Virginia, while Villa Bel Respiro has fine eclectic-Renaissance features as does Villa Fiorentina that reproduces Tuscan Renaissance motifs. Perhaps the most flamboyant example of Liberty style in Sanremo is the Casino, a work of Eugenio Ferret,

while Villa Nobel (residence of the scientist during his stay in the Riviera) and the splendid Villa Ormond, surrounded by a magnificent park, are perhaps the most elegant.

Sanremo has much more ancient roots, however. An example of this is the ancient village of Pigna, a typically Ligurian village stretching in clusters along the hillside, a safe distance away from the coast, infested by the Saracen pirates.

Travelling through this mysterious universe, with its winding alleyways, quiet squares, covered passages and arches that link the ancient houses is an interesting and evocative experience. Founded around the year one thousand and constantly reinforced up to the sixteenth century, Pigna's two access gates, the Gothic one of Santo Stefano and the sixteenth century one of San Giuseppe, are still



visible. On the left side, above the latter gate, you can see a three-holed trapdoor, where boiling oil and water were poured to drive back the aggressors.

Beyond the gate you can climb up on the left along the Rivolte di San Sebastiano, a charming covered street that leads to Piazza dei Dolori, where the Oratory of San Sebastiano and Palazzo Gentili (former Spinola) stand.

On the top of the hill, Pigna is dominated by the enormous seventeenth-century Santuario della Madonna della Costa, that, for centuries, has been a safe reference point for sailors approaching the town. The sanctuary houses a beautiful painting by Domenico Fiasella.

Much older than the Sanctuary is the thirteenth-century church of San Siro, with its central rose window and part of the central mullioned window belonging to the original building. The orthodox church of San Basilio, on the other hand, dates back to the twentieth century.

It is proof of the presence of a rather numerous Russian community, in Sanremo at the beginning of the Twentieth century. The Czarina Maria Alexandrovna, wife of Alexander II,

was one of the most famous guests, to whom the avenue of palm trees that she, herself, wished to donate to the town, is dedicated.



The sardenaira

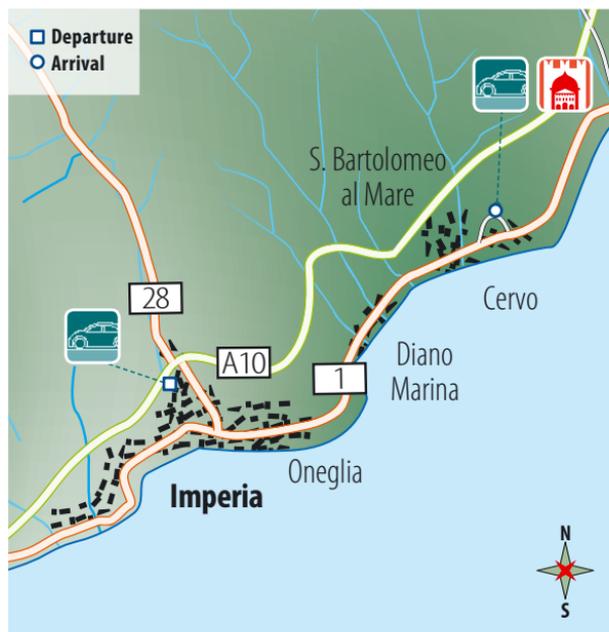
The *sardenaira* is the Sanremo version of the *pissalandra*, a focaccia whose main ingredient, as the name suggests, is the sardine, rather than the anchovy. Its ingredients are tomatoes, oil, olives, garlic, oregano and some chopped onion. The ingredients are spread over a thin, crispy focaccia.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Arma di Taggia
Sanremo

3 Imperia, Diano Marina, San Bartolomeo al Mare, Cervo

History with a sea view



The route

Departure:
Imperia.

Diano Marina 6.5 km,
San Bartolomeo al
mare 8.5 km.

Arrival:
Cervo 11 km.

Characteristics:
history,
architecture,
culture,
tourism.

Ancient villages, with a winding layout and distinctly medieval and Mediterranean charm. From Imperia to Cervo, the Riviera dei Fiori presents itself in all its splendour.

Imperia was founded in 1923 by the union of two ancient villages that had been rivals for centuries, separated by the river Impero: Oneglia and Porto Maurizio. Two totally different villages: Porto Maurizio stretches along the *Parasio* hill and descends towards the sea with its cluster of medieval buildings, while, in the flat Oneglia, the Savoy family, who became its lords in 1576, designed a network of streets overlooked by *palazzi* with arcades. As we walk through the *Parasio* we can appreciate the maze of quiet streets, suddenly opening onto a little square or a splendid building. The long scenic arcade of the convent of Santa Chiara must not be missed, while the cathedral and former town hall stand out in all their neo-classical grandeur. The town of Oneglia looks onto the little port: here fishing boats tie up, with their fresh

catch for a market that opens its doors right here, beside the sea. Alongside the fishing tradition of Oneglia we can find an equally ancient agricultural one, to which homage is paid in the Olive Museum, in the historical headquarters of the Fratelli Carli oil mill. The heart of Oneglia is crossed by via Doria. The name derives from the presence of the palazzo in which Andrea Doria was born in 1466, the mercenary, admiral and "father of the homeland" of the Republic of Genoa. September is the best month to visit Imperia, on the occasion of the famous tall-ships regatta: an event not to be missed to enjoy at close hand the charm and history of ancient ships. Diano Marina, a famous and popular tourist resort to the east of Imperia also has its fixed appointment: the *corpus domini* flower parade, when the streets of the town centre



are covered in wonderful, colourful “carpets” of flowers with elegant and imaginative patterns. The old Diano was badly damaged by the earthquake of 1887, but the civic museum illustrates its history through pre-Roman and Roman finds, including objects found on a Roman ship that sank just off the coast. The last chapter of this long history, that of a seaside resort, is well represented by the tall palm trees of the beautiful promenade and the sandy beach, the pride of the resort. San Bartolomeo al Mare and Diano have now grown into one single seaside resort.

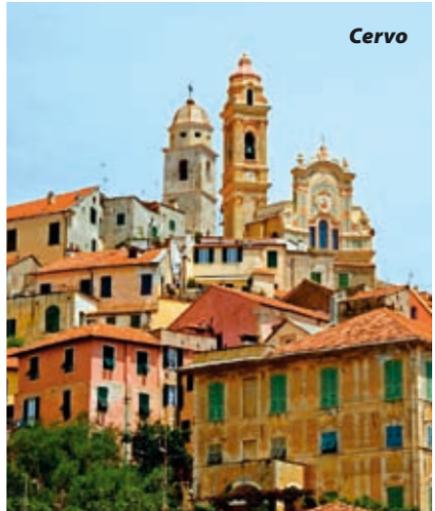
It is composed of two medieval villages: Rovere, surrounded by exuberant vegetation, is famous for its international musical contest, the “Rovere d’oro” which it hosts every year on the square of the Sanctuary, and, towards the centre, San Bartolomeo built around the

late medieval church with the same name. Just a few kilometres from San Bartolomeo, we come to Cervo, dominated by the concave Baroque facade of the parish church, high above the sea: almost a majestic, impressive, unique theatrical set. This image is sufficient to justify the inclusion of Cervo in the circuit of the most beautiful villages in Italy, where, each summer, an international chamber music festival is held. The medieval village also contains a castle that houses the Ethnographic Museum of Western Liguria.

In the homeland of extra-virgin olive oil

Behind Imperia and Diano stretch the Olive valleys, the veritable “sanctuary” of the Riviera’s olive growing. One of the best extra-virgin olive oils comes from the Taggia olive, that originates from Imperia: light, delicate, with a low acidity, it is ideal for dressing raw vegetables and salads but is also suitable – and highly recommended – for delicious, crispy fried dishes, for example, fresh fish. There are many other olive-based products, too, especially pâté which, with its decisive, scented flavour, is an excellent dressing for pasta dishes.

Cervo

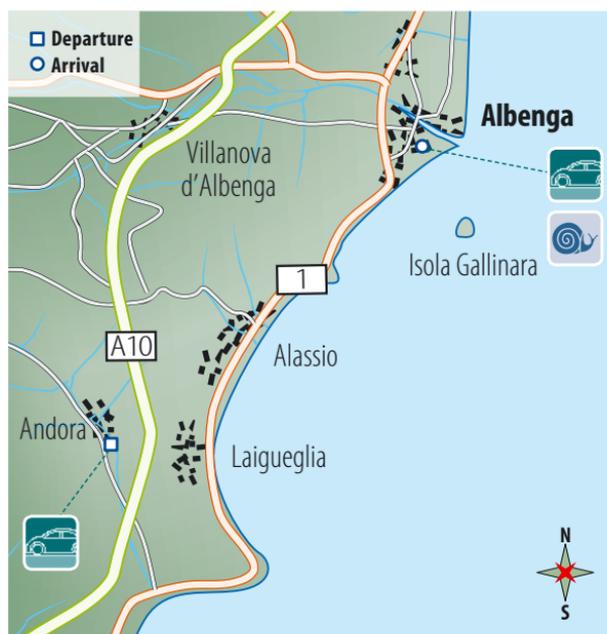


Little tourist ports/marinas

Cervo
Diano Marina
Imperia

4 Andora, Laigueglia, Alassio, Albenga

Between history and the sea



The route

Departure:
Andora.

Colla Micheri 10 km,
Laigueglia 11 km,
Alassio 14 km.

Arrival:
Albenga 21 km.

Characteristics:
history,
architecture,
art,
nature,
environment.

A land inhabited since Roman times and looking out over a clear sea where dolphins and whales may be sighted.

From the historical Andora to the intimacy of Laigueglia, from Alassio, the pearl of elitist tourism, to the turreted Albenga, in a succession of sensations and unique features.

Founded during the Roman period, today Andora contains important references to the medieval period, from its 10-arched bridge over the river Merula to the ruins of the Clavesana castle, situated above the old hillside village and composed of a few houses and the early Romanesque church of San Nicolò and the Romanesque-Gothic church of Santi Giacomo e Filippo. In modern times the settlements of *Marina* and *Pigna* (the latter around the Genoese defence tower), developed alongside the sea, with the beach and yachting marina, from which boats leave for amazing whale-watching trips. In fact, Liguria is at the centre of the protected marine area called Santuario dei Cetacei (the Whale Sanctuary). A road along the ridge lined by cluster pines leads to Colla Micheri, where the famous Norwegian navigator-archaeologist Thor Heyerdahl used to live.

Beyond Capo Mele we come to Laigueglia, with its alleyways and church of San Matteo, its bell-towers facing the sea to protect sailors from storms. The impressive sixteenth century Baluardo reminds us of pirate invasions with a costumed festival held every summer to re-enact the landings.

Just a few kilometres further along the coast, the quiet attraction of Laigueglia is contrasted by the exuberant elegance of Alassio, that owes its success to a beach of very fine sand and its mild climate. Symbols of fashionable and tourist Alassio are the Caffè Roma and the "muretto" (the little wall), that the artist Mario Berrino decorated with tiles signed by famous visitors, starting with Hemingway. A further example of *dolce vita* in Alassio is the "Miss Muretto" contest. Alassio's fame as a tourist resort, however, dates back to the end



Laigueglia

of the nineteenth century, when the town was frequented by the elite of British society. We find proof of the *belle époque* in the railway station and in the *English Library*.

Excursions may be made along the Roman road as far as Capo di Santa Croce, following the route towards Albenga along the archaeological walk. A glance towards the sea is rewarded by a glimpse of the nearby island of Gallinara, a nature paradise, with very interesting sea beds. Many companies specialising in diving organise guided dives in Liguria. The southern side is the most interesting, with its rocky sea beds. Here there are gorges and little caves that offer excellent shelter to large examples

of grouper, conger-eels, morays and octopus. Surrounded by a plain that is rightly called the “vegetable garden of Liguria”, Albenga has a very ancient history.

The *via Julia Augusta* (13 B.C.) has numerous Roman remains, while the historical centre, with its tall medieval towers, is one of the most beautiful and interesting, from the historical and architectural point of view, in the whole of Liguria. Piazza San Michele is the heart of the town, with its splendid Romanesque-Gothic cathedral and the adjacent early Christian Baptistery that is the only example (except for Ravenna) of Byzantine mosaic in northern Italy. The following are also worth a visit: the Museo Diocesano in the Palazzo Vescovile, the Museo Navale Romano (Roman Naval Museum), the Civico Museo Ingauno and the Permanent Exhibition of “La civiltà dell’olivo” (The civilisation of the olive).

In the vegetable garden of Liguria

The Albenga plain, and the Albenga hinterland in general, are considered the vegetable garden of Liguria, due to the wealth and high quality of their agricultural products: artichokes, with which the famous Ligurian Easter pie is prepared; the violet asparagus, typical of the Albenga area, protected by the Slow Food organisation, with its delicate, sweet flavour, excellent steamed and dressed with olive oil; finally the *trombetta* courgettes used to prepare the green pie or *tortelo*, very popular along the whole of the Western Riviera.

The area is also famous for its wine, three of which have been awarded the DOC mark: the Pigato and Vermentino white wines and the red Rossese della Riviera di Ponente.



Colla Micheri

Little tourist ports/marinas

Alassio

5 Finale Ligure, Varigotti, Noli, Bergeggi

The Middle Ages between the rocks and the sea



The route

Departure:
Finale Ligure.

Varigotti 6 km,
Noli 10.5 km,
Spotorno 16 km.

Arrival:
Bergeggi.

Characteristics:
history,
architecture,
art,
archaeology,
geology,
trekking,
sports.

Medieval villages that have kept their ancient character intact; the colours, perfumes and sensations of the luxuriant Mediterranean scrub, the pinkish-white rocks of the Finale area, that challenge climbers and conceal proof of prehistoric man. These are only a few of the aspects to be discovered in an area that is rich in resources and open-air activities.

Finalmarina, Finalpia and Finalborgo today form one single resort stretching inland from the coast - Finale Ligure - whose name indicates the ancient borders of the Roman town of Vada Sabatia. If Final Marina is a typical Ligurian seaside town, with highly interesting buildings such as the parish church of San Giovanni Battista, Finalborgo, included in the circuit of the "borghi più belli d'Italia" (the most beautiful villages in Italy), preserves the features of the medieval fortified village. The village was at the peak of its splendour under the Del Carretto marquises (XIII-XVI century) before it passed under the rule of Spain in 1602 and, then, Genoa, in 1713.

The main access to the village is through the Porta Reale, in the walls built in 1452 and which are still almost undamaged. The layout of the historical centre is typical of the fif-

teenth century, following its destruction during the war with Genoa (1448). The basilica of San Biagio, dominated by the octagonal late-Gothic bell-tower, was rebuilt in 1633 and contains late Renaissance and Baroque works of art. Castel San Giovanni stands above the village, proof of the Spanish presence. Higher up stands the Diamante tower, the only remains of the ancient Castel Gavone, built by the Del Carretto marquises in the XII century and demolished by the Genoese in 1715. The hill has a fine view over the white rocks of the Finale area, limestone walls reaching 80 meters, ideal for free-climbers who come here from all over the world. The numerous caves, including the Fate cave, and the deep grottoes, including the Pollera grotto, are very popular with potholers and were inhabited by prehistoric man. Numerous finds are displayed



today in the Finale Civic Museum, housed in the former Dominican convent of Santa Caterina at Finalborgo.

Continuing along the Aurelia towards the East we arrive at Varigotti, famous for its characteristic terraced one-floor houses, almost unique along the Riviera, that look straight over the beach. Immediately to the east of the village, high up right over the bay, in one of the most attractive corners of the Riviera, stands the medieval church of San Lorenzo.

The Mataossu of the Finale area

The Finale district, one of the most interesting agricultural areas of the Riviera, is one of the main producers of the IGT Lumassina wine, typical of the Savona area and better known as Mataossu. This is a dry white wine, with a flavour and lightness typical of Ligurian whites, that is an ideal companion for the traditional fish dishes of Riviera cuisine.

The Ciciarelli of Noli

Protected by the Slow Food Association, "ciciarelli" (in dialect *lussi* or *lussotti*) are little tapered silver fish, as long as a finger, without any scales, that have always been fished with trawl nets in the Gulf of Noli and in the sea between Finale and Spotorno. An ancient cooperative of about twenty Noli fishermen keeps this tradition alive, selling their catch along the sea-front of the maritime village. Excellent fried or soured, they can also be pickled in vinegar.

The section of the Aurelia between Varigotti and Noli, called "the Malpasso", was dug out from the base of high white cliffs with a sheer drop to the sea. Beyond the tunnel through the rock we come to Noli, with its turreted walls climbing up mount Ursino as far as the castle, and its medieval village behind the little Romanesque church of San Paragorio. Outside the church there are medieval tombs and Islamic majolica tiles, while inside we can see a wooden replica of the Holy Face of Lucca and frescoes from the Fourteenth century.

Noli took part in the first crusade and obtained trading and political privileges as a result; in 1192 it was taken over by the Del Carretto Marquises, and in 1202 was put under the protection of the powerful neighbouring Genoa, its ally until 1797. Proof of the past of this ancient maritime republic can be seen in the buildings of the historical centre, the most important of which are the Palazzo Viale-Salvarezza, Casa Pagliano and the towers of the Canto and the Town Hall. San Pietro cathedral, founded in the XIII century but rebuilt in 1548, contains relics of the patron saint Saint Eugenio.

The maritime tradition is still alive and is reflected in the menu: marinated fish, grilled stuffed cuttlefish, "gianchetti" (whitebait) fritters and the famous "ciciarelli".

Opposite Noli is the island of Bergeggi, today a nature reserve and protected marine area, with its environment of cliffs, caves (the sea cave is very beautiful) and Mediterranean scrub: a habitat to be discovered with trips or a dive.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Finale Ligure

6 Savona

A town between rock and sea



The route

Access:
Motorway A10,
Savona exit,
SS1 Aurelia.

Characteristics:
history,
architecture,
art,
food and wine.

Savona is a town that knows how to surprise: the mass of the Priamar fortress almost protects the memory of a historical centre that is both noble and lively at the same time. While along the marina you can relax and enjoy all the characteristic products of the land and the sea.

The original settlement was founded by the *Sabatii* Ligurians who were followed by the Romans and then the Byzantines; it developed on the settlement of the *pri-a-ma* (literally “stone on the sea”, known today as Priamar). It was here, in the XVI century that the Genoese, after destroying its houses and churches – including the cathedral – built the fortress that we can still see today. The position and design of the military complex is full of character and a relatively recent restoration allows us to appreciate its details. Today it is home to an art collection donated by Sandro Pertini and the civic archaeological museum. It is in the historical centre, however, that Savona expresses all of its atmosphere as a typically Ligurian medieval town. The beautiful Corsi and Guarnieri towers, built in the XII century, stand at the entrance to the town

with the characteristic rough appearance of the stone with which they are built. Behind them, is the taller, elegant civic Brandale tower, with its great bell that the inhabitants of Savona call the *campanassa*. It is one of the symbols of the town, together with the Leon Pancaldo tower, known to all as the “*Torretta*” which, all that remains of the medieval walls, is found at the gates of the old dockyard. Numerous noble buildings look out over the alleyways of the old town, and some of these contain important museums: an example is Palazzo Gavotti, in piazzetta Chabrol, home to the Town Art Gallery, while inside the nearby seventeenth century Cathedral of Santa Maria Assunta, we find the Museo del Tesoro. Alongside the Cathedral, crossing the cloisters, we can visit the beautiful Sistine Chapel, named after the famous Vatican chapel since it was



Savona

commissioned by Pope Sisto IV, a native of Savona, as the burial place for his parents.

In via Pia, the main street of the historical centre, we find the fifteenth century Palazzo dei Della Rovere, a family to which Pope Julius II (Giuliano della Rovere) also belonged. The street is also well-known for a historical bakery where you can still taste the traditional *farinata bianca* of Savona.

Savona also has numerous examples of Liberty-style architecture: some of the most important are the Palazzo dei Pavoni, in the very central via Paleocapa, with splendid *laggioni* decorations (majolica tiles), the Palazzo Dellepiane in corso Italia, and Palazzo dei Gatti in via Luigi Corsi, named after the decorations that combine floral motifs with portraits of cats. The Teatro Chiabrera, in piazza Diaz, is worth a separate mention, with its white neo-classical facade that emphasises the building's elegance.

Returning to the sea: in the marina that

embraces the old dockyard, around the old quays, in recent years typical bars and small restaurants have been opened, creating a quiet corner in which to taste typical specialties or to enjoy an aperitif.

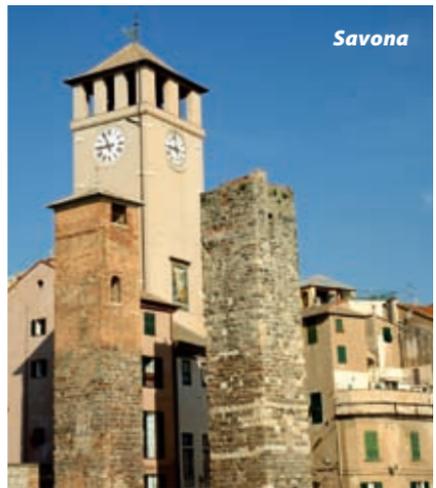
But the most important new feature, a sign of the tourist development of the town, is the ultra-modern cruise ship terminal, managed by Costa Crociere. Every year thousands of tourists disembark at the port of Savona and visit the town, but the Palacrociere also houses exhibitions, conferences, meetings and congresses, offering itself as a new and important multi-purpose facility for the whole town of Savona.

Farinata bianca and chinotti (bitter oranges)

Savona's local speciality is the *farinata "bianca"* or *turtelassu*, prepared with wheat flour rather than chickpea flour.

In addition to this we also find *chinotti*. These citrus fruits, imported to the Ligurian Riviera from China around the XVI century are too bitter to be eaten fresh but are made into candied fruit or fruit in syrup.

Recently the Savona chinotto was adopted by the Slow Food Association.



Savona

Little tourist ports/marinas
Savona

7 Cogoletto, Arenzano, Pegli

Villas and parks between the sea and the mountains



The route

Departure:
Varazze.

Cogoletto 5 km,
Arenzano 9 km.

Arrival:
Genova-Pegli 25 km.

Characteristics:
the environment,
botany,
trekking,
architecture.

Journey through the western Genoese area.

Old fishing villages, surrounded by noble villas, today are the venue for seaside and trekking holidays, to be combined with visits to lush parks and gardens.

Nestling between the mouths of the rivers Lerone and Arrestra and protected to the north by a scenic circle of mountains, Cogoletto has a certain charm, with its fine recently rebuilt seaside promenade. It can boast Christopher Columbus as one of its citizens: a plaque in the town's historical centre marks his presumed birth place.

The Farming Museum (Museo di Cultura Contadina) in the hamlet of Sciarborasca, emphasises the dual agricultural-fishing vocation of the place – a vocation to be discovered in the alleys of the historical centre, once popular with the local navy, and through trips on foot or mountain bike, quickly climbing to an altitude of more than 1000 metres in the Beigua park.

You do not have to go far to discover nature: in its 34,000 square metres, 400 typically

Mediterranean flower species grow in the Botanical Garden of Villa Beuca.

Continuing along the walk, recently dedicated to Fabrizio De André, we arrive in Arenzano, with its magnificent Villa Negrotto Cambiaso park. The botanical route takes us passed fifty different species, including the sequoia, the palm, the cork tree, the magnolia and a majestic example of the cedar of Lebanon. You can also admire swans and peacocks, an irresistible attraction for young and old.

The Santuario Basilica del S. Bambino di Praga, whose Solemnity is celebrated every year during the first week-end of September, is a popular place of worship.

Heading further inland, the high peaks of the Reixa, Rama and Argentea mountains that closely surround Arenzano invite us to make interesting trips and, every year, the sea-



mountains march attracts numerous enthusiasts from all over the world.

The route continues towards Villa Pallavicini in Genova-Pegli. Here the park, designed in 1840 by the architect and stage designer Michele Canzio as the backcloth for a theatrical production, combines botanical and architectural scenes; these include the coffee-house, neo-Gothic buildings and the little temple of Diana, at the centre of the attrac-

tive large lake. From the botanical-floral point of view, the avenue of camellias is a true work of art, displaying its elegant blossoms between February and March.

Potato frisco

Frisceus, the typical, soft, plump Ligurian fritters to be eaten very hot: the mixture may include chopped lettuce or onions while the surface is sprinkled with salt when cooked. Cogoleto's typical potato frisco are an appetising version of the traditional, white flour-based dish.

Then we have cuculli, prepared with chick-pea flower, and fried in oil.

Stuffed aubergines

This is a traditional summer dish along the Riviera and is made from the "round Genoese aubergine", a small round variety. The aubergines are boiled and cut in half, stuffed with a mixture composed of the flesh of the aubergines mixed with egg, prescinseua, Parmesan cheese, bread softened in milk, garlic and oregano, baked in the oven and sprinkled with bread crumbs.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Arenzano



8 The town of Christopher Columbus

In discovery of the Mediterranean capital



The route

Access:
Motorway A10.

Characteristics:
history,
art,
architecture,
food and wine.

From a maritime republic to the European capital of culture, Genoa's history is reflected in the maze of its alleyways, the pride of its noble buildings and in the splendour of its works of art.

One of the largest aquariums in Europe; one of the most extensive medieval historical centres in the world; fortified town walls extending for 13 kilometres, reminding us of the Great Wall of China. Superlatives that crown Genoa as one of Europe's capitals of culture. The journey in discovery of the "Superba" starts from the sea, in the district of Porto Antico: a small oasis beside the sea. Here we find the majestic, spectacular Aquarium, also interesting for the accurate reconstruction of marine environments all over the world; the Galata Museo del Mare; the Città dei Bambini; the Museo Luzzati and the Museo dell'Antartide.

Looking over the area of Porto Antico we find Palazzo San Giorgio, built in 1260 as the first public *palazzo* of Genoa, headquarters since 1407 of the Banco di San Giorgio, that used

to administer the public debt of the State of Genoa, and since 1904 by the Port Authority. It was in the *prisons* of the palazzo that Marco Polo, a prisoner of the Genoese, was supposed to have dictated his *Million* to Rustichello da Pisa. Behind the *palazzo's* prisons the old Sottoripa arcades wind, full, today as in the Middle Ages, of bakeries and frying shops, called *sciamadde* (literally "in flames"): an opportunity to taste the *farinata*, *panissa* and *cuculli*. Continuing towards the east, we reach the junction with via San Lorenzo: an elegant street of buildings with noble facades. The square with the same name is dominated by the Cathedral, with its Romanesque-Gothic lines and characteristic facade with horizontal black and white stripes that is typical of medieval Genoese architecture. Not to be missed is the Museo del Tesoro, with the fifteenth



Piazza de Ferrari

century arch that is supposed to contain the ashes of John the Baptist, masterpiece of the work of late Gothic goldsmiths, and the “Sacro Catino”, a dish in green glass (for a long time considered to be an emerald) celebrated for centuries as a relic of Christ’s Last Supper.

Continuing along our way we come to the majestic, white Porta Soprana, belonging to the XII century city walls. Further ahead we come to the “*casa di Colombo*” (Columbus’s house), rebuilt over the ruins of a house that belonged to the Columbus family whose Genoese origins now seem to have been accepted by historians. We return to Piazza De Ferrari, the heart of Genoa, overlooked by the Palazzo Ducale, currently the venue of exhibitions, events and conferences, and Carlo Felice Theatre, with its neo-classical facade, but rebuilt in the Nineties.

After crossing via XXV aprile and piazza Fontane Marose, rich in historical buildings, we enter via Garibaldi, formerly Strada Nuova, the

“via Aurea” of Genoese nobility. The sight of the row of sixteenth century, frescoed buildings is exceptional as is the visit to Palazzo Bianco and Palazzo Rosso, jewels of Genoese art, Palazzo Doria Tursi, currently housing the Town Hall, and Palazzo Carrega Cataldi, headquarters of the Chamber of Commerce.

Most of the buildings in via Garibaldi were – together with many other noble Genoese buildings, included in the “*Rolli degli alloggiamenti pubblici*” (Registers of public dwellings), destined, between the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, to house in turn (by the drawing of lots) aristocrats and sovereigns on state visits to Genoa. Today, 42 of these buildings are included in UNESCO’s World Heritage List. Beyond via Garibaldi the route continues through via Cairoli and via Lomellini, both pedestrian roads, as far as the famous, restored via del Campo, with a record shop that has been transformed into a museum dedicated to Fabrizio De André.

Beyond the medieval Vacca gate, the twin of Porta Soprana, we arrive in the multi-ethnic via di Pré, that ends at the Commenda di San Giovanni building. This was the first “maritime station” of Genoa, that welcomed pilgrims travelling to the Holy Land.

Fast food Genoese style

Genoa is a city to be discovered, walking through the old alleyways of its historical centre, perhaps tasting the strangest take-away specialities; each bakery makes the *focaccia* that today can boast the protection of the Slow Food association that controls that the traditional recipe is observed.

Instead, in the *sciamadde* we invite you to taste the *cuculli*, fritters prepared with vegetables and chick-pea flour, and, again the thin, crispy *farinata*, also made from chick-pea flour, and the fried *panissette*.



The Old Harbour

9 Genova-Nervi, Bogliasco, Pieve, Recco

Nature and flavours in Paradiso (Paradise)



The route

Departure:
Genova-Nervi
motorway exit.

Bogliasco 3.5 km,
Pieve Ligure 7.5 km.

Arrival:
Recco 16 km.

Characteristics:
the environment,
trekking,
culture,
food and wine.

A dive into the Paradiso gulf, whose name is justified by the exuberance of the Mediterranean flora and the ever blue sea.

A route that takes us to see modern art, luscious parks and to enjoy incomparable food and wine.

The strange name reveals its Celtic origins. *Near-av-inn*, i.e. "near the river". And, for anyone arriving from Genoa, the little medieval bridge that crosses the river Nervi is this place's first treasure. We come to Nervi to admire the beauty of the little port surrounded by tall painted houses, to enjoy the relaxing "Anita Garibaldi" promenade along the cliff overlooking the sea, to spend an afternoon in the beautiful green park: rich in botanical treasures, starting from the splendid rose garden (currently with 800 varieties of roses) and the home of artistic treasures such as the Modern Art Gallery (GAM) housed in villa Saluzzo Serra, with more than 300 works of art dating back to the years between the XIX and XX centuries. Also worth a visit is the Museo Luxoro, located in an elegant early Twentieth century building, that contains, together

with three fine paintings by Magnasco, works of applied art such as holy-water fountains, majolicas and crib statues. Recently the new headquarters of the Wolfson collection was inaugurated here, with Italian works of art and design of the Twentieth century. The district of Sant'Ilario alta can be reached along a steep *creusa*, a paved mule-track typical of the Riviera. For a little effort you are repaid by an incomparable, staggering view of the sea.

A short section of road divides Nervi from Bogliasco, to be followed slowly in order to fully appreciate the beauty of this unique place, where vegetation triumphs and the sea dominates.

The ancient history of Bogliasco can be seen in the Roman bridge that crosses the stream with the same name of this typical seaside



Nervi

village. A history tormented by invasions by the Saracens who forced the inhabitants to take shelter in the hills where today the villages of Sessarego, Poggio and San Bernardo are located: all linked by little paths overlooking the sea. From here we can walk to Pieve Ligure, in a dominating position, at the foot of mount Santa Croce (Pieve Alta), famous for its mimosa festival, celebrated for its characteristic blossoming in the middle of winter. Another important appointment is in the month of May (and repeated in October): the guided trek up mount Santa Croce, starting from the parish church. In July, Sori, famous because it has the longest beach in the Golfo

Paradiso hosts the “Jazz Festival”, a traditional, important appointment for lovers of good music. We continue towards Recco, famous for the excellent quality of its culinary specialities, including the cheese *focaccia*, *pansotti* and *trofie* to be dressed with *pesto*. Not to be missed is the festival of the Madonna del Suffragio, on 8th September, in which all the districts of Recco challenge each other to a fireworks competition.

The food and wine capital of Liguria

The appetising cheese *focaccia*, the delicious *pansotti* in a walnut sauce, *trofie al pesto*; these are the specialities that make Recco the food and wine capital of Liguria. The main speciality is the cheese *focaccia*, that is not a variety of the traditional Genoese *focaccia*, since it is prepared with two very thin, crispy layers that only just manage to hold the liquefied delicacy of the fresh cheese. *Pansotti* are little *ravioli* with a special filling, prepared with a mixture of aromatic herbs (*preboggion*) with an unmistakable flavour. The tasty walnut sauce contrasts with the delicacy of the *pansotti*.

Finally, *trofie*, i.e. little *gnocchi* produced by hand (at least they were, once upon a time), with the characteristic shape of a wood shaving. Ideal to hold the *pesto*.



Nervi

Little tourist ports/marinas

Nervi
Recco

10 *The Park of Portofino, Camogli, San Fruttoso*

In the heart of the Mediterranean



The route

Departure:
Recco.

Camogli 2.5 km,
Ruta
di Camogli 5.5 km.

Arrival:
San Rocco
di Camogli 8 km.

Characteristics:
the environment,
botany,
geology,
history,
art.

Nature is the unrivalled queen of the Promontory and the marine reserve of Portofino. Mediterranean scrub and rocks triumph in a world stretching over the sea. Some little bays contain historical and architectural jewels.

The promontory of Portofino was the first nature park to be opened in Liguria, in 1935: this uncontaminated area is a triumph of Mediterranean nature and includes historical monuments of exceptional beauty and importance.

It can be explored and enjoyed in all its splendour following the network of paths: for example, by taking the path that descends from the panoramic San Rocco di Camogli through a thick ilex grove and the tiny village of San Nicolò di Capodimonte – a handful of houses nestling around a XII century church – as far as Punta Chiappa, a veritable rock tongue stretching out over the sea. The route leading from San Rocco, halfway up the hill, through the Mediterranean scrub and, at some parts, with a steep drop to the open sea, is more demanding but exceptionally beautiful. This

track finally takes us to the bay of San Fruttoso, with its famous abbey, built between the X and XIII century, and the Doria tower, dating back to the XVI century. In the completely renovated monastery we can see the upper cloisters, the chapter-house, the church, the tombs of the Doria family and cloisters in Gothic style, with elegant windows overlooking a little beach.

At a depth of 17 metres on the sea-bed we can see the famous bronze statue of Cristo degli Abissi, by the sculptor Guido Galletti. Diving down to the statue is an irresistible attraction for divers, also because the sea-bed around the Promontory (declared a protected marine reserve in 1999) is considered one of the finest in Europe, with a succession of beautiful fauna and environments with amazing shapes and colours.



The boat service is an interesting alternative to walking trips. San Fruttuoso can easily be reached by boat from Portofino and Camogli, two little towns that deserve a visit, in their own right.

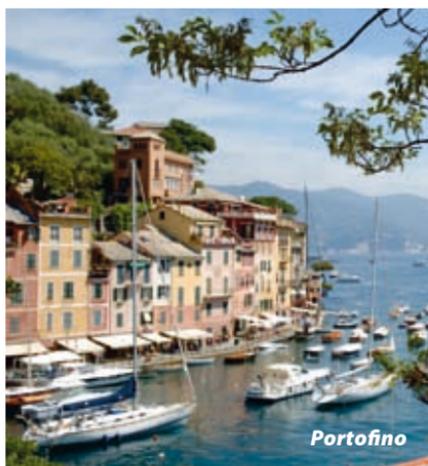
Camogli is one of the most famous villages in eastern Liguria, with its multi-coloured buildings and some interesting monuments such as Castel Dragone and the Basilica di Santa Maria Assunta, while the Naval Mu-

seum reflects the great maritime tradition of the place.

Portofino is one of the most famous resorts on the Riviera. Unmistakeable is the spectacular row of houses with typical painted facades that follow the natural shape of the green inlet offering delightful views towards the little peninsula where the church of San Giorgio, the little cemetery, Castle Brown and the beautiful lighthouse stand.

Traditional products, inventive menus

Fishermen still throw their nets off the Portofino promontory to fish for anchovies, the basic ingredient of the Mediterranean diet. This fish is the symbol of Liguria. Queen of oily fish and of the table, often neglected in favour of other fish, in this area the anchovy gets its own back. Many recipes in traditional Ligurian cuisine have anchovies as their basic ingredient. Many starters, in which anchovies are dressed with oil and lemon juice, or accompanied by peppers, mushrooms, garlic, first courses (*linguine and bavette* with anchovies), tasty second courses (anchovy soups, *ciuppin*, roulades and even veal with anchovies) and famous anchovy sauces. Then there are anchovies preserved in salt and oil, that were once the main food of sailors. Not to be missed is the famous Camogli fish festival, held on the second Sunday in May, where fish is traditionally fried in a huge pan.



Little tourist ports/marinas

Camogli
Portofino
(Rapallo)
Recco
(S. Margherita Ligure)
(Zoagli)

11 *Santa Margherita Ligure, Rapallo, Zoagli*

The exclusive charm of Tigullio



The route

Departure:
Rapallo.

Santa Margherita Ligure 6 km,
Rapallo 10.5 km.

Arrival:
Zoagli 15.5 km.

Characteristics:
the environment,
nature,
tourism,
sport,
history.

An itinerary through the most famous resorts of the Eastern Riviera, in discovery of a peaceful Mediterranean world, rich in historical remains and natural treasures.

Santa Margherita Ligure, Rapallo, Zoagli...

Places where you can linger, holiday or live.

The famous capital of elitist holidays at the beginning of the Twentieth century, Santa Margherita still reflects in the elegance of its sumptuous Liberty-style hotels, the charm of the exclusive resort. Its fame, however, dates back even further, as some summer homes of Genoese families prove: the sixteenth century Villa Durazzo Centurione, with its fine park and impressive structure.

The villa is open to the public and its opulent interior includes, in the picture gallery, works by Piola and De Ferrari, painters of the Genoese Baroque school.

Continuing towards Portofino we soon come to the magnificent Benedictine abbey of San Gerolamo della Cervara, built in the fourteenth century and recently returned to its original splendour. In addition to the church, the tour also includes the "Saracen" tower,

the sixteenth-century cloisters, the chapter-house and the gardens, including the fabulous monumental garden, overlooking the coast. Just beyond the Abbey stretches Paraggi Bay, with its extraordinarily clear sea. A dive in these waters reveals a considerable variety of fauna and the wreck of a merchant ship that sank in 1917. There are numerous sporting associations at both Santa Margherita and Rapallo that organise dives along the coast. The resorts in Tigullio offer sun-lovers numerous establishments with fine facilities and the possibility of practicing water-skiing and windsurfing.

Moving further East, the hamlet of San Michele di Pagana is well worth a visit, with its rocky point and parish church containing a painting by Anton Van Dyck. Beyond San Michele we come to Rapallo, a seaside resort



nestling in a small bay that protects it from the currents. This, however, was not enough to protect it from pirate raids that forced the Republic of Genoa to build the fortress over the sea, in the middle of the XVI century.

There are two yachting marinas and a fine 18-hole golf course. The most significant place of worship in the whole of Tigullio, however, is the panoramic Santuario di Montallegro, lo-

cated above Rapallo. It can be reached along a path but the easiest way to get there is by the attractive cableway.

The old textile tradition in Tigullio is displayed in the Museo del Merletto (Lace Museum) set up in the seventeenth-century villa Tigullio.

From Rapallo we continue towards Zoagli, once frequented by writers such as Ezra Pound and Sam Benelli, where we can touch, literally by hand, the refined quality of the fabrics with their elaborate, precious textures, still produced on the very old wooden looms.

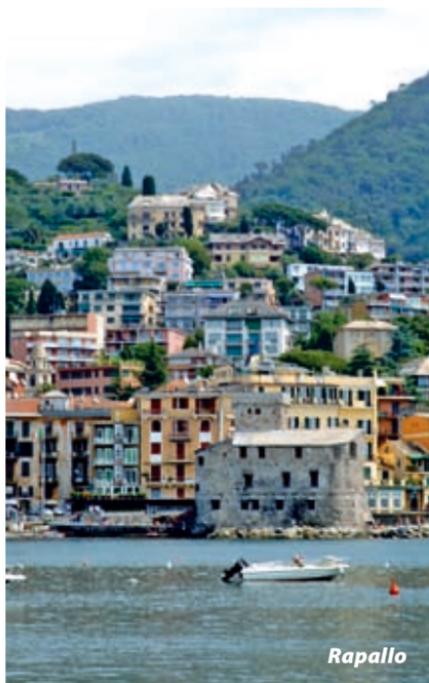
The Vermentino of Tigullio

This is one of the most famous DOC wines of Eastern Liguria. A dry white wine suitable to accompany a wide selection of dishes, from seafood starters to the Genoese minestrone, lasagne al pesto, octopus risotto, gilthead baked with potatoes or in foil. With its delicate perfume and balanced flavour, the wine is a successful, congenial companion to the dishes we have listed. It must be served at a temperature of 10°C, in medium-sized, long-stemmed glasses. It is best if drunk young. Recently, other species of vines have been rediscovered along the hills of the Riviera such as the *Stumiscià* and the *Ciliegolo*.

A typical dish of Tigullio is the *Ciuppin*, a refined fresh fish soup prepared with mussels, shrimps and fresh water fish.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Rapallo
S. Margherita Ligure
Zoagli



12 Chiavari, Lavagna, Sestri Levante

Here the sea is a fairy tale blue



The route

Departure:
Chiavari.

Lavagna.

Arrival:
Sestri Levante 9 km.

Characteristics:
history,
art,
crafts,
tourism.

Tourism and ancient traditions blend in eastern Tigullio, a region that surprises with the elegance of its resorts, the exuberance of its nature and its interesting art treasures and architecture.

Located at the centre of Tigullio, Chiavari has a chessboard-like urban layout, designed in the XII century. Its origins, however, are more remote, as proved by the remains of a prehistoric necropolis, preserved in the Archaeological Museum of Palazzo Costaguta Rocca. The castle, built by the Genoese in 1147 is in ruins today but the citadel, of which a crenellated tower built in the nineteenth century Hall of Justice still remains, dates back to the Middle Ages.

The seventeenth-century cathedral of Nostra Signora dell'Orto contains numerous works of art, but the most valuable paintings are found in the parish church of San Giovanni Battista: paintings by Piola, Carlone, Fiasella and De Ferrari and wooden sculptures by the school of Maragliano.

Some of the most important historical build-

ings include the palazzo of Portici Neri (XIII century) and Palazzo Maschio Torriglia (XIV century); the latter housing in its picture gallery "Il sacrificio di Mosè" by Grechetto, one of the most important painters of the Genoese Baroque school. But the most healthy and straightforward way to discover Chiavari is to walk through its historical centre, with its shops, the Cantero theatre and its deliciously *retro* cafés. The fifteenth-century arcade of the *caruggio dritto*, the main street of the historical centre, in what is today called via Martiri della Liberazione, is the hub of the old town.

The love for traditions is reflected in the refined craft productions. The thread-like, ultra-light, strong beech-wood "*campanino*" chair is famous. The macramé fabrics, with their plaited fringes, are much sought-after.



Sestri Levante

Lavagna is a very popular tourist resort. Its name, however, reveals other origins: it was from its port that the slate coming from the quarries in the hinterland was shipped. The town's main industry is tourism supported by the numerous hotels and its long sandy beach in the centre where the slopes

of the hills covered in olive-trees, pines and chestnuts encircle the town. Heading east, we come to Cavi di Lavagna, with the largest sandy beach of the eastern Riviera and more than forty bathing establishments and tourist facilities for all tastes.

Sestri Levante, so beautiful that it enchanted famous authors such as Lord Byron or Andersen, who described Sestri Levante as "The fairies' bay". The names of its two bays, "*Baia delle Favole*" (The Bay of fairy tales) and the "*Baia del Silenzio*" (the Bay of Silence), are sources of inspiration, in one of the most beautiful seaside resorts of the Ligurian coast, and to which Sestri has dedicated an important literary prize, awarded every year to the best children's books and their authors, illustrators and publishers. An intimate, charming isthmus separates the *Baia delle Favole* from the *Baia del Silenzio*, linking the mainland to the "island", a portion of ground on which the ancient church of San Nicolò stands.

Stretching along a flat area, Sestri Levante has many old noble villas, built by the Genoese aristocracy and destined today, in many cases, to other purposes: Villa Negrotto Cambiaso is a congress centre, villa Durazzo Pallavicino houses the Town Hall while the opulent villa Balbi is a luxury hotel. Art-lovers may visit the famous Galleria Rizzi, while walkers can head for destinations such as Punta Manara, Punta Baffe and mount Castello.



Chiavari

The Seafaring Tradition: the *bagnun*

The most important festival in Italy to promote the anchovy takes place at the end of July in Riva Trigoso, a fishing village in the municipality of Sestri Levante. The *Bagnun* is a dish with ingredients that are humble but rich in flavours, as the seafaring tradition requires.

Garlic, onions, parsley, tomato and white wine are browned and then cleaned anchovies are added for just a few minutes; the mixture is then pour onto a dish and ship's biscuits are added. For 43 years ships' chefs have prepared 10,000 plates of *bagnun* and distributed them free of charge along the beach.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Chiavari
Lavagna
Sestri Levante

13 Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, Riomaggiore

The Cinque Terre (Five Villages) National Park



The route

(by train or on foot)

Departure:

Monterosso railway station (Genoa-La Spezia line).

Sentiero "azzurro" ("blue" path)

Monterosso-Vernazza
1h 30',

Vernazza-Corniglia
1h 15',

Corniglia-Manarola 1h
Manarola-Riomaggiore 30'.

Characteristics:
the environment,
scenery, food and
wine, history, culture,
sports.

Monterosso, Vernazza, Manarola, Corniglia, Riomaggiore: this is the Cinque Terre National Park. A magic place, to be visited on foot, walking through the wonderful luxuriant vegetation, intoxicated by scents and dazzled by colours, suspended between the proud rock and the dazzlingly translucent sea.

You are advised to start the route by train. Get off at Monterosso station, the first of the Cinque Terre, arriving from the West, immortalised by the verses of the famous Nobel Prize winner Eugenio Montale and famous for its excellent anchovies. Monterosso has an ancient, troubled history, as the watchtower built by the Genoese in 1276 to sight the Saracens and re-adapted as the bell tower of the Gothic church of San Giovanni Battista proves. To admire some works of art you have to climb San Cristoforo hill: here the Capuchin Convent contains paintings by Cambiaso and Strozzi as well as a crucifix belonging to the Van Dyck school.

The seaside resort of Monterosso has two splendid sandy and pebbly beaches while diving enthusiasts can enjoy the amazing world of the Cinque Terre marine reserve, with its

spectacular sea-bed below punta Mesco.

But to enjoy the Cinque Terre to the full you must visit it on foot. The coastal "blue" path appears as if carved between rocks and terraces and overlooks the sea almost all the time. It takes an hour and a half to reach Vernazza, which, looked at from above, appears like a mirage. An ancient, turreted village, with the fourteenth-century parish church of Santa Maria di Antiochia lapped by the waves. And for divers, the spectacle of its rocky sea-beds. Vernazza is recognised as one of the most beautiful villages in Italy. Corniglia appears clustered high up on the rock (you can reach it up a long flight of steps), Manarola – also one of the most beautiful villages in Italy – is like a crib over the sea, so much so that the famous illuminated crib is set up on its steep terraced hillsides.



Le cinque Terre

The famous via dell'Amore (the Love Path) stretches from Manarola to Riomaggiore, skilfully dug out from the rock. The tall multi-coloured houses of Riomaggiore climb up the corso del rio maior, today covered, which gives the place its name. The castle and the fourteenth-century parish church of San Lorenzo, with its Gothic facade, are located in the upper part of the village, while a botanical route equipped for bird watching has been set up along the

promontory of Torre Gaurdiola. The sea-beds of Riomaggiore are also much appreciated by the numerous divers who come here.

There are many ways to visit and enjoy the Cinque Terre: for example, by visiting the Sanctuaries high above the villages – each village has its own - from the Santuario di Montenero above Riomaggiore to those of Volastra, San Bernardino, Reggio and finally Soviore, above Monterosso. Panoramic little sentinels, often guarding shrines that represent authentic collection of local chronicles.

The terraced hills stretch between villages and sanctuaries: steps carved out above the sea, where grapes ripen for the famous Cinque Terre white wine or for the rare Sciacchetra: a raisin wine with unmistakable nuances and scent.

Local products

It is not surprising that such a special, Mediterranean area has such excellent products.

Starting from its grapes: the *bosco, albarola* and *vermentino* grapes, grown on the terraces high above the sea, provide the raw material for the Cinque Terre D.O.C. wine, a dry, scented white, and for the Cinque Terre Sciacchetra D.O.C., the internationally famous raisin wine, adopted by the Slow Food Association.

Cinque Terre lemons are grown organically over the whole National Park area. The park also produces the Cinque Terre organic *limoncino*.

Monterosso anchovies, also adopted by the Slow Food Association, are the main ingredients of *tian*, the pan. The fish is accompanied by potatoes, tomatoes and herbs before being baked. However, the most direct and immediate way to enjoy anchovies is in the sandwich available in many bars in the Cinque Terre.

The Cinque Terre Marine Reserve

Established in 1997 to protect the natural resources of the sea-bed, the Cinque Terre Marine Reserve extends over 4,591 hectares. The most interesting areas are Punta Mesco and Capo Montenero, with their rich biological formations and numerous species of marine fauna. The almost exclusively rocky sea-beds are an ideal habitat for sea-weeds.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Manarola
Monterosso
Riomaggiore
Vernazza

14 The town of La Spezia

A mirror of history and culture



The route

Access:

Motorway A12,
La Spezia-Santo
Stefano Magra exit,
SS1 Aurelia.

Characteristics:

history,
art,
culture,
food and wine.

With its quiet, relaxed atmosphere, there are many reasons to visit the second largest town in Liguria, starting from the rich cultural range of exhibitions and museums and its historical origins and maritime traditions.

To conclude with its food and wine, offering appetising variations of the Ligurian tradition.

A town with port, maritime and military traditions, La Spezia has been skilful in valorising its rich cultural, artistic and tourist heritage, highlighting, rather than excluding the vocations that still characterise the town; an example of this is the port that can be visited using the boat service to the most beautiful places in the Golfo dei Poeti and the Cinque Terre.

La Spezia owes its growth to the establishment, in the XIX century, of the Naval Arsenal which is now part of the Technical Naval Museum. This growth was characterised by a chess-board urban layout, with wide avenues typical of the Savoy period; a design that created the pleasant, airy seaside promenade, the Passeggiata Morin – “introduced” by the greenery of the public gardens,

The most popular and famous road, however, is the old via del Prione, a medieval artery

that “cuts” vertically inland across the town from the coast: elegant shops, bars and cafés look out onto the pedestrian street with their *dehors* and, in particular, the palazzina delle Arti and the Museo del Sigillo. The building contains important temporary exhibitions in a very attractive architectural context.

The *palazzina* contains the Biblioteca Speciale di Storia dell’Arte e Archeologia (The Special Library of the History of Art and Archaeology). Alongside the building we find the Museo Amedeo Lia, established in the old Convento dei Frati Minimi di San Francesco di Paola, founded in La Spezia in the XVII century. It contains a very rich collection of works of art, including paintings, sculptures and archaeological remains.

Still in via del Prione, in the former fifteenth-century Oratory of San Bernardino we find



the Museo Civico Etnografico “G. Podenzana”, housing more than 3,500 objects concerning the history, ethnology and anthropology of the local area and outside the region.

A strong sign of the cultural and artistic vivacity of La Spezia is the Centro di Arte Moderna e Contemporanea, established in the appropriate context of the ultramodern building in Piazza Cesare Battisti, in the former Court. The Centre houses permanent collections – with important XX century works – and hosts qualified exhibitions to understand contemporary authors and art movements.

If you want to get to know the ancient history and medieval soul of La Spezia, on the other hand, you must climb up to San Giorgio castle, extended several times between the XIII and XVII centuries. There are fine views of the gulf and the town from the fortress.

The castle houses the “Ubaldo Formentini” archaeological collections, in particular stat-

ues and steles coming from the areas of La Spezia and the Lunigiana.

The historical events and geographical position of La Spezia also characterise its food and wines: local produce forms the basic ingredients for the “*mesciùà*”, a typical soup made from pulses. But sea-food also plays an important role, starting from the famous mussels that grow in the calm waters of the Gulf.



The *mesciùà*: folk origins, noble flavours

The *mesciùà* is the main typical dish of La Spezia. It is a tasty soup composed of chickpeas, *cannellini* beans and spelt wheat boiled separately and then mixed together in one single dish to be dressed with oil and pepper.

The recipe has strange origins: it is supposed to come from the custom whereby dockers’ wives collected everything that fell from sacks of grain as they were being loaded from the quays of the port of La Spezia.

Little tourist ports/marinas
Lerici

15 Portovenere, Lerici, Tellaro

When the sea is poetry



The route

Departure:
La Spezia.

Portovenere 14 km,
La Spezia 28 km,
Lerici 35 km.

Arrival:
Tellaro 42 km.

Characteristics:
the environment,
scenery,
food and wine,
history,
culture,
tourism,
sport.

Villages with an ancient history, a calm and always blue sea, scenery surrounded by Mediterranean nature which, here, in the Golfo dei Poeti, is thick and luxuriant.

A world inviting you to stay, to go on a boat trip, to take a dive into the sea or to go on a walk.

The name "Golfo dei Poeti" (The Gulf of the Poets) refers to the presence of George Byron and Percy Bysshe Shelley during the first half of the Nineteenth century, but the bay embracing La Spezia can be considered a poem of nature and the sea.

Stretching from the white rocky point of the promontory of Montemarcello to the cliffs of Portovenere, it includes places of incomparable beauty such as Tellaro, Lerici, Fiascherino and San Terenzo. There are three islands in front of Portovenere called la Palmaria, il Tino and il Tinetto.

It isn't easy to reach these wonderful places: the road is winding and the train stops at La Spezia. An inviting solution is offered by the boat services. Anyone deciding to use the car must cross La Spezia before heading towards Portovenere. A place of staggering beauty,

framed by the azure sea that invites you to take a bath or dive to discover its wonderful sea-bed. The mirror of water reflects the magical colours of the row of village houses extending beneath the forbidding gaze of the fortress. The historical-architectural wonder of Portovenere is, however, its Gothic church of San Pietro, built in 1256 on the tongue of rock that forms the tip of the promontory. The ancient Genoese village dates back to the XII century (the church of San Lorenzo was built by the famous stone masons from the Antelamo valley), but Portovenere has Roman origins, as proved by the ruins in the nearby Villa del Varignano and on the tiny Island of il Tino. A jewel of nature and history, the public can visit the Isola del Tino by boat. Isola Palmaria is easier to reach, located right in front of Portovenere and is part of the Regional



Tellaro

Nature Reserve: in fact, there is a handy boat service to the island, and the almost uncontaminated beauty of its beaches and cliffs and wild Mediterranean vegetation can be explored along footpaths. There are also caves that are only accessible from the sea. During the boat trip you will see the areas where the famous local mussel is grown.

At the other end of the gulf, at the foot of the promontory of Montemarcello, Lerici is dominated by the imposing castle that today houses an interesting Geo-palaeontological Museum. Proof of the ancient disputes between the Genoese and the Pisans, the building includes the thirteenth-century chapel of Sant'Anastasia.

Villa Marigola, standing on the promontory between Lerici and San Terenzo is a marvel of nature and architecture. Its evergreen, English-style park (also including a golf course) overlooks the Golfo dei Poeti and has splendid views.

The route continues from Lerici along a road that passes through the exuberant Mediterranean vegetation of the Promontory. Beyond

the bay of Fiascherino we come to Tellaro, included in the circuit of the most beautiful villages of Italy because of the charm of its alleyways and the little old church of San Giorgio standing on the headland.



Portovenere

The mussels grown in the Gulf

The rich plankton, calm waters and balanced presence of salt make the gulf of La Spezia an ideal place to grow mussels. La Spezia mussels are famous and can be enjoyed in many classical ways, for example cooked à la marinara or as an accompaniment to pasta dishes. Stuffed mussels and the exquisite mussel soup are some of the typical recipes of this area.

Little tourist ports/marinas

Lerici
Portovenere

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