

EXPLORE!

Trails of Portofino and the Cinque Terre
8 days

Italy - Trip code WCT



Trails of Portofino and the Cinque Terre

Enjoy day walks exploring the rugged beauty of Liguria's UNESCO listed coastline, where steep cliffs plunge into a turquoise sea and colourful fishing villages nestle precariously at their foot. In the Cinque Terre National Park, walk on the Azure Trail and pass through vineyards and woodland among local farmers at work. Discover the chic harbour town of Portofino and spectacular landscapes of Portovenere.

Trip highlights

- ★ **Cinque Terre National Park** - Superb walking along a UNESCO-listed coastline
- ★ **Five Villages** - Explore quaint fishing villages connected by coastal footpaths
- ★ **Portofino** - Visit this chic harbour resort
- ★ **Portovenere** - Hike through the stunning landscapes that inspired the poets Byron and Shelley
- ★ **Bonassola** - Centre based in a seaside village with easy access to walks

ACCOMMODATION GRADE:

Simple

These are often small, family run establishments or campsites which provide a no-frills experience with adequate amenities and service standards. Sleeping arrangements are simple, sometimes with en suite facilities.

WALKING GRADE:

Easy To Moderate

This grade is ideal if you want to enjoy both easy and moderate level walks on the same tour. You'll be walking mainly on good paths and at low altitude, with occasional more demanding ascents or descents.

GROUP SIZE:**10 - 16**

Maximum group size ranges from between 6 to 20 people, depending on the type of trip, the transport and accommodation used and activities included. We rarely have groups that are smaller than five or six people and the average is 12 people plus an Explore leader.

Itinerary

Itineraries on some departure dates may differ, please select the itinerary that you wish to explore.

DAY 1 - Join trip Pisa airport; transfer to the Cinque Terre Coast

Arriving in Pisa, we transfer to the Cinque Terre Coast and our base for the week, the pretty seaside village of Bonassola. The Cinque Terre, or Five Lands, is named after the string of five fishing villages which nestle at the foot of the plunging cliffs along this section of the Italian Riviera. It is a National Park and also a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Renowned for its beauty, the region has a wild and rugged coastline with breath-taking harbours and carefully built terraces, cultivating grapes and olives. An ancient system of footpaths and mule tracks connects the five villages and it is these you will explore during your week on the Ligurian coast.

We stay at the welcoming family-run Pensione Moderna, located just a few minutes' walk from the beach, bars and restaurants of the village and the nearby train station which provides us with easy access to the walking routes along the coast.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: None

DAY 2 - Beautiful coastal walking to Monterosso via Levanto

The first part of today's walk is flat and takes us along the route of the old coastal rail line from Bonassola to the small town of Levanto. Sections of the route pass through some long (and well-lit!) tunnels hewn out of the rocky cliffs. Levanto is a town of pre-Roman origins situated at the northern end of the Cinque Terre. We take some time to look around the pretty painted villas, beautiful piazza and 13th century loggia before continuing on the coastal path to Monterosso. Initially ascending on stone steps out of the town, we soon join the main trail and ascend, quite steeply in places, on an undulating and sometimes rocky trail to a high point of around 300 metres. Part of the trail passes through cool woods of ilex and other Mediterranean species. From the open sections there are great views south along the Cinque Terre coast. The descending trail into Monterosso is steep in places with the final section on a series of steps down to the town and beach.

Monterosso is the largest of the Cinque Terre villages and has a beautiful old centre and, typical to the Cinque Terre, rows of brightly coloured terraced houses. We head straight to the old part of the village, dominated by the ruins of a Genoese castle, for an exploration of the 'caruggi' - medieval narrow alleys and backstreets that make up the area. There should be time for a quick swim on the beautiful sandy beach at Monterosso before catching a train back to Bonassola for the evening.

Today's nine kilometre walk is graded Moderate and expected to take around five to six hours with a total ascent and descent of 380 metres.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 3 - Coastal walk through three Cinque Terre villages

Our walk today takes us from Corniglia (accessed by train from Bonassola), via Vernazza and then back to Monterosso. This is a lovely section of the Cinque Terre coastal trail that leads us through vineyards, olive and lemon groves, giving a true feel for the agriculture of the region. We will see how skillfully the trees and vines have been terraced along the hillside, making the most of the difficult growing landscape. Unlike the other towns and villages of the Cinque Terre, Corniglia is not directly adjacent to the sea, it is set around 100 metres up the cliff side and surrounded by terracing.

The first part of the walk ascends a series of 370 steps from the station up to the village. We'll take our time and there are resting points on the way up allowing a chance to take in the coastal views. There's time to take a look around before embarking on the main trail towards Vernazza, climbing slowly on a sometimes rocky path from Corniglia to reach a lovely view point back to the town. The trail then undulates until the hamlet of Prevo before the descent, which includes some sections on rocky steps, into Vernazza. We'll stop for lunch here and some free time for a wander or even a dip in the sea if the weather is good, before continuing on to Monterosso from where we catch a train back to Bonassola.

Today's seven kilometre walk is graded Moderate and expected to take around four hours with a total ascent and descent of 405 metres.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 4 - Inland hike from Bonassola through vineyards, villages and fields

Today we will spend time exploring the paths around Bonassola. Walking directly from the hotel we ascend through vineyards and woodland into small hamlets and villages that show the true nature of the Cinque Terre. Away from the more tourism influenced areas, we see how the locals live and work in this beautiful yet rugged region. Our walk is circular with some stunning views of the coastline and cliff sides and returns us back to Bonassola for the afternoon. The village has a beautiful long sandy beach on which you could spend some time relaxing, or you could visit the Chiesetta della Madonnina della Punta, a tiny chapel overlooking the sea. For those with a sweet tooth Bonassola is also home to some marvellous gelato (Italian ice cream) parlours. Later there will also be the opportunity for us to enjoy some local wine tasting (optional) to round off the day.

Today's ten kilometre circular walk is graded Easy and expected to take around three-and-a-half hours with a total ascent and descent of 320 metres.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 5 - Free day; optional trips to Genoa or La Spezia

Today has been left free for further personal exploration of this spectacularly scenic area. You may choose to relax in Bonassola, or take the local train to La Spezia or Genoa, to get lost in their winding alleys and bustling ports whilst taking time to try some of the local specialities; breads, wines and pestos. It is also possible to continue your walking adventure and take to some of the other local walking trails in the surrounding area.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 6 - Train to Santa Margherita; walk to Portofino via San Fruttuoso Abbey

This morning we board the train once more, alighting at the pretty fishing town of Santa Margherita to start our mornings' walk. Our walk takes us, initially along the coast, on an undulating and gradually ascending trail to San Fruttuoso a small and beautiful bay that is home to three slightly ramshackle houses, a Benedictine Abbey, a church and its 16th century watchtower. We will take a little time to relax in this tiny hamlet, take a look around and maybe grab a coffee in the one restaurant serving the area. From San Fruttuoso we walk over the headland before descending to the chic and fashionable town of Portofino. With its beautiful harbour and multi-coloured houses, Portofino really is a sight to behold. A wonderful place to people watch, Portofino has been attracting the rich and famous since the late 19th century. We have the option to either walk back to Santa Margherita or take a bus (paid locally) before returning by train to Bonassola.

Today's eight kilometre walk is graded Easy and is expected to take around four hours with a total ascent of 320 metres.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast & Lunch

DAY 7 - Train to the fishing village of Riomaggiore, walk to Portovenere

This morning we take the train to Riomaggiore, the most southerly of the Cinque Terre villages, known for its wine grown on the local terraced vineyards. After time to look around, we ascend slowly from the village onto the main 'Azure Trail' footpath that links the Cinque Terre villages and walk along the rugged coast to the stunningly located Portovenere. This is the longest walk of the week and the trail takes us through a variety of landscapes from terraced fields to forest. Some parts of the trail are quite rocky underfoot with the trickiest section being the descent into Portovenere.

As always, we will take our time on these sections. A small town with an extremely picturesque harbour of painted houses, Portovenere comprises of three villages; Fezzano, Le Grazie and Porto Venere. The ancient Portus Veneris is believed to date back to at least the middle of the 1st century BC. and it is believed that the name refers to a temple to the goddess Venus which was sited on the spectacular rocky outcrop where the church of Peter the Apostle now stands, jutting straight into the sea. The town was a favourite haunt of the poet Lord Byron who used to swim across the bay to meet his friend and fellow poet Percy Shelley. We will spend time in Portovenere, relaxing after our walk and exploring the beautiful town and churches before boarding a local bus to take us to La Spezia and then on, by train, back to Bonassola.

Today's 15 kilometre walk is graded Moderate and is expected to take around five hours with a total ascent of 385 metres and descent of 300 metres.



Accommodation: Pensione Moderno (or similar)



Simple Hotel



Single room available



Meals Provided: Breakfast

DAY 8 - Transfer to Pisa airport; trip ends

Today we depart the Ligurian coast and drive back to Pisa airport where our trip finishes at 1045.

For those of you that have an afternoon or evening flight, there is the opportunity to travel into nearby Pisa before returning to the airport for your flight. The airport has luggage storage facilities and regular, inexpensive shuttle buses into town which take around 10 minutes. This is at your own expense and unaccompanied but the leader will be able to assist with information and what better way to finish a trip to Tuscany than visiting Pisa!



Meals Provided: Breakfast

Walking and Trekking information

DAILY DISTANCES

Day 2	9km
Day 3	7km
Day 4	10km
Day 5	
Day 6	8km
Day 7	15km

Walking grade

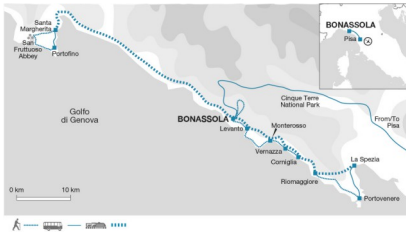
Easy to moderate

Trek details

We walk on 5 days with an average of 4-5 hours walking on each day. The trails are generally well maintained with sections of steps and it can be rocky underfoot in places. Three of the walks are graded as moderate and two are easy. There is a maximum total daily ascent of approximately 400 metres.

Max walking altitude (m)

560



Why book this trip

On this trip we stay in the Pensione Moderna, a simple and homely family-run hotel, conveniently situated just 100 m from the beach in the pretty seaside village of Bonassola. All of the bedrooms have their own private bathroom, television and free Wi-Fi is available. Surrounded by a tropical garden, the terrace is the perfect place to relax at the end of the day. The local railway station is just a few minutes away, allowing easy access to the villages and fantastic walking trails of the Cinque Terre National Park and beyond.

What's included?



Included meals

Breakfast: 7
Lunch: 2



Transport

Bus
Train



Trip staff

Explore Tour Leader / Driver



Accommodation

7 nights simple hotel

Trip information

Country information

Italy

Climate

April/May and October/November are pleasantly warm. June/September are the hottest months. Showers are common in Autumn.

Time difference to GMT

+1

Plugs

2 Pin Round

Religion

Roman Catholic

Language

Italian

Budgeting and packing

Optional activities

The following excursions and/or activities are usually available and may be arranged locally. Estimated costs are provided below for guidance only, are on a per person basis unless shown otherwise, and may depend on the number of participants. Prices quoted are correct as of the date these tour notes were originally issued but may change at any time due to currency fluctuations. Please note: These activities are booked and paid for direct with the supplier and do not form part of your Explore holiday contract.

Bonassola - wine tasting € 5

Train to Genoa - € 6.80 (one way)

Train to La Spezia €3.40 (one way)

Clothing

Take light and comfortable clothing that can be layered according to the temperature. July and August are the hottest months whilst early and late in the season go prepared with clothing to suit drops in temperature and possible showers. Take your swimming gear, light rainwear may be needed at any time of year, and a warm fleece/jacket is recommended for cooler evenings and nights.

Footwear

We recommend you bring lightweight walking boots, make sure that your boots are worn-in and comfortable before the start of the trip. Also trainers or sandals for relaxing and general wear. We suggest that on international flights you either carry your walking boots in your hand luggage or wear them - should your luggage be lost or delayed, your own boots are the one thing that will be irreplaceable.

Luggage

20kg

Luggage: On tour

One main piece and a daypack.

Equipment

A water bottle, sunhat and high factor sunscreen are all essential. A torch is useful in case of power cuts or emergencies. Trekking poles are not essential but can be useful on the ascents and descents around the coast.

Tipping

Explore leader

At your discretion you might also consider tipping your Explore Leader in appreciation of the efficiency and service you receive.

Country Information

Italy

Food and drink

The costs for meals may vary depending upon location, type of restaurant and number of courses eaten and so the prices given are an average guide. Local restaurants located off the beaten track may be less expensive, whereas an upmarket

restaurant located in the centre of a major city may charge more.

Lunch price

£5.00 - 10.00

Dinner price

£15.00 - 20.00

Beer price

£2.00 - 4.00

Water price

£1.00 - 2.00

Foreign Exchange

Local currency

Euro.

Recommended Currency For Exchange

GBP.

Where To Exchange

We recommend that you change any currency into Euros prior to arrival. Bureau de Change are generally only found in major cities and large airports.

ATM Availability

Major towns.

Credit Card Acceptance

Larger hotels and restaurants.

Travellers Cheques

Only in major towns. Please note, the exchange rate for cash and Travellers Cheques is poor.

Transport, Accommodation & Meals

Transport Information

Bus, Train

Accommodation notes

Booking a Single Room

All of our group tours are planned and operated on a twin-share basis, meaning that the standard cost is based either on individual travellers sharing accommodation with another group member of the same sex, or people who book together sharing accommodation. Please refer to the tour notes where the single room option availability is detailed on a night by night basis for this tour, and the price for the available nights is detailed on the dates & prices tab by departure date. For Self-Guided trips the Single Room supplement offers the option of a single room each and is charged per person. The Single Room supplement also applies to the third person in a party of three that will be accommodated in a single room.

Pensione Moderna is a simple and homely family-run hotel, conveniently situated just 100 m from the beach in the pretty seaside village of Bonassola. All of the bedrooms have their own private bathroom, television and free Wi-Fi is available. Surrounded by a tropical garden, the terrace is the perfect place to relax at the end of the day. The local railway station is just a few minutes away, allowing easy access to the villages and fantastic walking trails of the Cinque Terre National Park and beyond.

Essential Information

FCO Advice

We strongly recommend that you check your government's travel advisory for up-to-date information and advice about your destination: safety and security, entry requirements, health, local laws and customs. For UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office advice [click here](#).

For more information from Explore about travel advice, [click here](#)

Under 18 immigration guidance

Please note that some countries require proof of parental consent when travelling overseas with under 18s. Please check requirements with the relevant embassy or consular office well in advance of travel if this applies to your party.

Price Guarantee

Once your booking has been confirmed we guarantee the price will not increase, whatever the circumstances. Before booking please ensure you have read our important tour pricing information. [Booking Conditions](#)

Visa and Passport Information

Italy: Visas are not required by UK, E.U Nationals, Australian, New Zealand, US and Canadian citizens. Other nationalities should consult their local embassy or consular office.

If you do require assistance in obtaining a visa then you may consider applying through Explore's recommended visa service in the UK, Travcour. See www.travcour.com to download the relevant visa application for your trip, if applicable (UK citizens only), along with details of how to apply for your visa through Travcour. The Team at Travcour will be happy to answer specific questions relating to visa applications, please call them directly on 0208 5431846.

It is your responsibility to ensure that you are in possession of a full passport, with the correct validity for your chosen destination.

Booking conditions

Before booking your Explore trip, please ensure that you read both our [Essential Information](#) and [Booking Conditions](#).

Transfers

[Find out more about Trip Transfer Terms and Conditions before you book.](#)

Booking a land only package with Explore

Customers who have chosen to book on the 'Land Only' arrangements of our tour, please ensure that you have checked your tour specific 'Joining Instructions' prior to booking your own travel arrangements. Your joining instructions can be found below in the dates and prices information.

You may also be eligible for the Free Explore Transfer.

Joining Tour Abroad

Customers booked on the 'Land Only' arrangements will now receive a Free Transfer, provided you arrive and depart on the tour only itinerary start and end dates. The transfers will be from the Explore designated airport or train station to the joining point of your tour, and then back from the ending point to the designated airport or train station. The exception to this rule is customers who are booked on a tour where the joining and ending point is at the designated airport or train station.

Free transfers are not available for Self-Guided, Polar, Tailormade or Tours for Churches customers.

If you are not eligible for the Free Transfer then you will need to make your own way through to the joining and ending point. On a majority of our tours Explore will be able to provide a private transfer at an additional cost. Please ask for a quote at the time of booking.

For more information regarding the Explore Free Transfer [click here](#)

Insurance

It is a condition of booking with Explore that you have adequate valid travel insurance. It is your responsibility to arrange appropriate travel insurance and ensure you have read and understood the full terms and conditions of your travel insurance policy to ensure that you are covered for all activities you intend to undertake whilst on the tour, including all optional activities. Your Insurance Policy must fully cover you for medical expenses and emergency repatriation to your home country. Please ensure your policy includes medical emergency helicopter evacuation in the event of illness or injury and covers the entire duration of your holiday. If you are trekking at altitude please ensure that there is no upper altitude limit which may limit or exclude cover for your trip. The cost of many of our Polar Voyages will exceed the capped amount covered by standard insurance premiums and you will be required to pay an additional premium to cover the full value of your trip. Please ensure that you are covered for the full amount of your holiday cost, as insufficient cover could invalidate a claim under the policy. Medical and repatriation insurance cover is not mandatory for UK residents who are travelling on trips within the United Kingdom.

Read more information about what travel insurance is required.

Flight information

Explore offers a wide range of flexible flying options to make joining and leaving our trips easy. [Read more about them here.](#)

Flight Information

You are able to book this tour on a 'land only' basis or as a 'flight inclusive' package. Your flight inclusive package will be fully protected by the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA) ATOL protection scheme.

Booking a flight inclusive package with Explore

We have a good selection of flights not only from London but from many regional airports around the UK allowing us to compare fares between scheduled carriers as well as low cost and charter airlines. Our dedicated flights team will match the best flight options to your arrival and departure airport.

On our website we display a UK flight inclusive package guide price which is generally based on a London departure. To avoid paying supplements or to secure your preferred flight option, we recommend booking as early as possible, especially for peak travel dates.

Maximum altitude (m)

560

Italy

Vaccinations

Nothing required. Tetanus recommended. Please check the latest requirements with your travel clinic or doctor prior to departure. The above is not an exhaustive list. Further information regarding vaccinations and travel health advice can be found by following the NHS and NaTHNaC links at [Explore Travel Health](#) and from your local healthcare provider. Visa and vaccination requirements are subject to change and should be confirmed by you before travelling.
