

**Along the coast...** descriptions, main monuments and excursions in the villages of the Riviera of Levante

#### Portovenere



Portovenere

The maritime village "Veneris Portus" founded by the Romans, is situated in the Eastern part of the "Poets' Gulf". Its favorable strategic position, ideal for controlling the maritime trade of the Gulf of La Spezia, attracted Genoa's interest for the antique port village.

Portovenere owes its growth to Genoa's domination which started in 1113 with a heavy battle between citizens of Genoa and the ones of Pisa, who had enlarged their domain to Lerici.

For centuries it has been the point of penetration for Genoa in the eastern part of the coast. The village is dominated by the castle, and on its opposite you will see the island Palmaria, where you can find on a rock the rests of the tower Scola, constructed by the citizens of Genoa in 1606.

The quay is bordered by a terrace of tower-houses with up to seven floors with colored fronts. Leaving a door with towers behind, you will arrive in Via Capellini,

main axes of the medieval village, which runs along the coast, and which is flanked by antique houses often decorated with original architectonic elements: roof-gardens, doors in slate or in marble, fine door decorations.

In the course of the years the village has lost its original maritime and military vocation. Nowadays it is a developed and beloved tourist center.

**Attention:** In summer because of the big number of tourists there are big parking problems.

#### Main monuments:

**Church of San Pietro:** - The church was constructed on the promontory Arpaia on the rests of a heathen temple between the 4th and the 5th century.

The church contains different styles of various époques.

From a terrace in front of the church you will have a fantastic view on the sea.

Going towards the center you will see on your left some stairs which will lead you to the Cave Arpaia (also called Cave of Byron)

**S. Lorenzo** - A bit further you can go up to a wide square in front of the Roman collegiate church of S. Lorenzo.

The church dates back to the beginning of the 12th century, but in the course of the years parts are destroyed and restructured in the style of the respective époque. In fact, the church represents a mix of Roman forms, Gothic and Renaissance elements.

**Castle From** - the church's square you can go upstairs to the Castle constructed by the citizens of Genoa in the 7th century in an elevated position in order to control the coast and the village.

In 1453 it gets destroyed, and after that reconstructed.

The actual construction consists of two parts of different époques.

#### Excursions:

**To the islands of the surroundings** - your stay in Portovenere can be completed with an excursion to the islands of Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto, which represent an extension of the sea in the western part of the Gulf. Once they were important prehistoric and monastic settlements; nowadays they are deserted.

**To Riomaggiore** - path N. 1

## Riomaggiore



Riomaggiore is not only the most eastern village of the Cinque Terre (and the first that you will reach coming from La Spezia) but probably also the most antique one. A legend narrates that the village's origins date back to the 8th century, when it was founded by a group of Greek refugees, escaped from the iconoclastic persecution by Leo III.

The first written evidences concern the village's passage from the Fieschi to the Republic of Genoa in 1276. With its most antique houses, the village is able to give a first impression of the typical architecture of the Cinque Terre which has to be adapted to the lack of place.

The antique houses are towerhouses with 3-4 floors with two rooms on every floor which are connected by stairs.

The main street is a covered brook, the Rivus Maior, which gave the village its name. From the main street depart a lot of small side streets that wind in the

middle of stairs, tunnels and arches.

Recent restorations have given back the splendor of former times to the arches, taking down the superstructures of the 1950s. It seems that the houses have been constructed without system - with their fronts in yellow, pink, ochre, and blue they will fascinate you immediately.

Riomaggiore owes its fame to the painter Telemaco Signorini from Florence, who from 1860 onwards stayed several times in Riomaggiore, and who painted in several pictures the village's characteristics.

## Main monuments

**The parish Church San Giovanni Battista** - The parish church S. Giovanni Battista was constructed in 1340, and can be found in the village's higher part.

In 1870 the front seemed to break down, and was therefor reconstructed in neo-gothic style.

Only the rose-window has not been changed. You should have a look at the ogival arches that divide the inside in three ships, the wooden crucifix by Maragliano, and the Baptist's Preaching by Fiasella.

**The medieval castle** - In the village's north-west, on the hill Cerricò, there are remarkable rests of the Castle (centuries XV-XVI); here you can also find the old cemetery; from the castle you can see Monterosso, and a big piece of the sea.

In the surroundings there is the oratorio of S. Rocco, of 1480 (the year is written on the door).

**The Sanctuary of the Madonna of Montenero** (have a look at "Excursions") - The legend narrows that the building is found by Greek refugees in the 8th century, but the first historical account dates back to the year 1335; at the end of the 19th century a reconstruction was carried out, which constitutes the actual structure.

## Excursions:

**To the Madonna di Montenero** - 341 m - path N. 3 a - 1 hour At the village's south-east starts a path which will bring you to the Sanctuary.

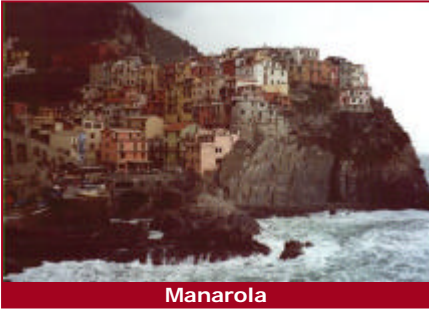
Almost the whole path is in the shadow, however, it is quite hard to arrive, as from the sea level you will reach a height of 300 m from where you will have a fantastic view along the whole coast.

Until the 11th century, the sanctuary was the parish church of Riomaggiore.

From here you can follow the path N. 3 as far as Telegrafo, where you can take on your right the path N. 1.

**To Manarola** - spath N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path".

## Manarola



Manarola

From an administrative point of view, Manarola makes part of Riomaggiore. Founded by the inhabitants of the Roman settlement Volastra, in 1276 the village passed from the Fieschi to the Republic of Genoa. The village, placed on a promontory of dark rock, winds along the covered brook Groppo, which defines the main street. Various narrow side streets paved in stone depart from here, and steep stairs will lead you to the houses and gardens. The side streets and stairs constitute an artistic labyrinth which invites you to be discovered. There has not been enough place for a square - a modern platform of stone constitutes a certain substitute. Furthermore, the nature left only a little space for a small port which is closed between two rocky spurs.

The lack of place and of secure shelters constricts the inhabitants to pull the boats along steep "slipways" fixed on the rocks.

### Main monuments:

**Parish Church dedicated to the Nativity of the Virgin Maria** - The parish church, also called S. Lorenzo, was constructed in the year 1338.

It can be found in a dominating position above the village.

The building represents a mix of gothic (a simple front with rose-window with small columns, and filigrees of various designs) and baroque style (the inside with three ships).

**Cemetery** - Outside the village, there is the picturesque cemetery.

### Excursions:

**To Volastra** - 314 m - path N. 6 - 1 hour Next to the parish church of Manarola starts a steep street which will lead you between vineyards and olive-trees to Volastra, which in part conserves the village's original structure.

In an isolated position you can see the sanctuary of Nostra Signora della Salute (340 m), of the 12th century; the inside has been restructured several times, as far as the planimetry and the front are concerned, the building maintains its Roman origins.

**To Corniglia** - path N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path"

**To Riomaggiore** - path N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path"

## Corniglia



Corniglia (which is probably of Roman origins) differentiates itself from the other villages for its elevated position high above the sea. It is situated on a promontory of a height of about a hundred of meters which is steep and inaccessible from the sea, close to a hill with numerous vineyards. A lot of stairs lead you from the railway station to the village. The main street winds in the middle of low constructions, and finishes on a panoramic terrace with a fantastic view over the sea. It represents a building and urban typology which has not been radically changed, and which is very similar to the one of the rural centers of the hinterland. The square in the center of the village allows the villagers and the tourists to enjoy the fascinating atmosphere of Corniglia which seems more a village of farmers than of fishers.

### Main monuments

**The Parish Church of S. Pietro** - The Parish Church is next to the city's entrance, and it is one of the most interesting monuments of the Ligurian gothic in the Cinque Terre. Constructed in 1334, it comprises gothic and baroque forms, and it strikes for its simple and elegant front with its rose-window in white marble from Carrara. Inside you can admire the baptismal of the 12th century, and a polyptych divided into slices that represent the Masters.

**The antique postal station** - Very close to the parish church there as a building with gothic arches in black stone, that according to the tradition, represents the antique postal station of the family Fieschi. You should have a look at this building, and also at the rests of antique fortresses on rocks high above the sea.

**Oratorio of the Disciplinati di S. Caterina** - On the square in the village's center you can see the oratorio of the Disciplinati di S. Caterina.

### Excursions

**S. Bernardino** - 385 m - path N. 2 e 7 b - 1 hour You have to follow the path N. 2 for Vernazza as far as Prevo, where you have to turn right in order to take the path N. 7 that goes up to the Sanctuary. The building was constructed at the beginning of the 20th century on the rests of an antique chapel, which dates back to the 17th century. If you look towards north-west you see Vernazza and the headland Mesco, at south-east you can admire the coast as far as the cape of Montenero

**To Vernazza** - spath N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path"

**To Manarola** - path N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path"

## Vernazza



Founded around the year 1.000 by the inhabitants of a village in the surroundings of Reggio, Vernazza acquired in the course of the years strong and rooted maritime traditions. In 1276 it is handed over from the Fieschi to the Republic of Genoa. As Vernazza has the only natural port of the Cinque Terre, it lives a period of wealth during Genoa's domination.

This wealth is proved by the houses which add to the classic tower-form more elaborated architectonic forms, like open galleries, arcades and decorated doors. Vernazza's architecture does not only prove a level of life and a period which are economically and socially superior to the ones of the other centers of the Cinque Terre, but it also causes that Vernazza is considered the most beautiful village of the Cinque Terre, and one of the most fascinating places of the whole Liguria. The village covers the brook Vernazzola which constitutes the central thoroughfare, and which crosses the urban network consisting of an elevated number of side

streets connected by steep stairs and short ways.

Going down the street you will arrive at the picturesque square next to the port: on one side an arcade-palace and mediaeval houses; on the other one the parish church S. Margherita d'Antiochia with the octagonal belfry of 40 meters.

Going up to the village's higher part, you see rests of Genoa's fortifications, which consist of town walls and two defending towers. You arrive at the Municipality's square, from where you will see the whole village.

### Main monuments

**Santa Margherita di Antiochia** - In 1318 the church in gothic Ligurian style (restructured between 1964 and 1970) was built on a rock in front of the sea on the rests of a construction of the 11th century in 1318. The main entrance is in the north, but because of the lack of place, you have to enter at the apse's side. The inside is divided in three ships, and is reached by going up various stairs. The characteristic impressive octagonal belfry with a height of 40 m is placed on four presbyterial pillars.

**Castle Doria** - The castle dominates Vernazza on a rock of a height of more than seventy meters in the village's south. It was built at the middle of the 11th century during the Oberthengi's dominance, who understood immediately Vernazza's strategic importance as main port of the Cinque Terre.

**Church of the Friars** - The church is collocated in the village's higher part in the north. It was built on request of the local population in order to offer hospitality to the friars "Minori Riformati" in the middle of the 17th century.

### Excursions

**To Madonna di Reggio** - 354 m - path N. 8 - 1 hour In the village's north starts a pedestrian street which after having left behind the cemetery goes up between olive -trees to the Sanctuary, localized at Vernazza's original primitive center.

The building was probably constructed on the rests of an antique praying place in the 11th century. Rests of this place are under the flooring. In the course of the years the sanctuary has been restructured various times.

**To Monterosso** - path N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path"

**To Corniglia** - path N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path"

## Monterosso al mare



Monterosso al mare

Monterosso al Mare lies in the most eastern part of the Cinque Terre, and it is the first village, which you will reach coming from Levanto. Monte rosso was probably constructed after Albareto's destruction by the "Longobardi" in the 7th century. The place-name appears for the first time in a document of the year 1056. It is definitively known that Monterosso was a feud of the Obertenghi and the Da Passano; in 1276 it was handed over to Genoa which took care of its fortification. The village is closed between various hills (which go down to the sea), olive-trees, lemon-trees and above all vineyards which produce an excellent white wine. The village consists of two centers with two sand beaches: Fegina and Monterosso. Monterosso is the antique settlement which in part has maintained its characteristics. Its main axes is constituted by the covered brook Buranco. About 100 years ago in the west of the village's old part a residential zone with villas (Fegina) was constructed.

This zone has launched the Cinque Terre's discovery by the tourists. Today the original agricultural-maritime vocation has been replaced by the tourism which is also responsible for the building expansion. Because of its wide dimensions Monterosso does not impress you with the typical charm of the Cinque Terre's other villages, nevertheless it will be able to fascinate you. It offers e.g. a lot of accommodations and two big beaches. Furthermore, the street along the sea is ideal for having a long walk in the evening and during the day.

### Main monuments

**San Francesco** - A pedestrian street goes up along the slope of the hill San Cristoforo that divides Monterosso from Fegina, and that leads to the Capuchin's monastery with the adjoined church of S. Francesco. Inside you can admire the historical-architectonic richness like e.g. the crucifixion by Van Dyck.

**San Giovanni Battista** - You should have a look at the beautiful church S. Giovanni Battista of the year 1244. It is a wonderful example of the Ligurian gothic with a front in marble and local stone, and with the belfry which originally was a watch tower.

### Excursions

**To Madonna di Soviore** - You have to go towards north along the street which goes up to the hill Gritta, where you turn right towards Pian di Barca (km 5,9); or if you go by foot, you have to follow the path N. 9 (1.20 hours). Crossing an area of olive-trees, you will arrive at the Sanctuary (464 m), which has very old origins dated back the Rotari's invasion.

The church was modified in the 14th century, and restructured between the 18th and 19th century. Its front contains a valuable ogival door, which conserves in the center a bas-relief of marble (Madonna Addolorata).

On the mountain side of the wide square, you can see a guest-rooms' building with arches, built in the 18th century and enlarged for the last time in 1909.

**To the promontory of Mesco** - 311 m - path N. 10 - 45 min. From the beach of Fegina, after having left behind the "Giant" (a stone sculpture), you will go up by mule-tracks to the rests of the church of S. Antonio, from where you can go on to Levanto.

**To Vernazza** - path N. 2 - have a look at the "blue path".

## Levanto



Levanto

Even if Levanto's first historical account dates back to the 12th century, its origins are probably pre-roman which is proved by various manufactured articles from the Iron Age found in this zone.

The village is an antique feud of the Malaspina and the Da Passano; in 1229 it is passed over to the Republic of Genoa. But Levanto obtains many privileges from the "Superba" (Genoa): it has its own statute and a complete administrative autonomy.

The association to Genoa helps to develop the maritime activities. However, the original rural and maritime vocation has been replaced by the tourism, which has also partly changed the village's appearance because of the massive building development of the last decades.

The village is placed in a wide amphitheater with hills of pine-trees, chestnut-trees, olive-trees and vineyards. Levanto is one of the most beloved holiday destination of

the Riviera of Levante.

It owes its popularity to its wide beach which is partly covered by sand, and partly by pebbles, and for its closeness to the famous Cinque Terre - Levanto offers more accommodation possibilities than them - that's why a lot of travelers stop here.

## Main monuments

**The Parish Church of S. Andrea** - The church is an important example of the Ligurian gothic, and was built in 1226, and enlarged in the 15th century. Due to its front divided into stripes of white marble and local stone it is considered one of the Liguria's most beautiful churches.

The ogival door with a fresco of the year 1400 in the lunette, is overflowed by a fine rose-window; on the sides, two elegant mullioned windows with two lights.

**The Castle of S. Andrea** - In the 12th century the castle was constructed by the Malaspina in order to defend the village.

**S. Rocco** - The church of a convent is a baroque construction with an "Agati" organ in one of the ships of the year 1879

**Church S. Maria della Costa** - The village's most antique church conserves a remarkable door with a bas-relief of marble of the late 16th century.

**Oratorio of the Confraternity of S. Giacomo** - The oratorio of the 17th century contains a bas-relief of the beginning of the 16th century on the door; inside you can have a look at two wooden crucifixes of the 18th century and an "Agati" organ of the year 1827.

**Loggia of the Municipality** - (8th century) It is a loggia with five arcades on columns with Roman capitals in local stone.

**Franciscan Church of the Virgin Mary** - Founded in 1449, and reconstructed in 1615 after the breakdown of one ship; above the door, Virgin Mary, marble relief of the 16th century.

## Excursions

**To monte Rossola** - 563 m - 2 hours You have to follow the state street 332 towards the crossroads for Bonassola, a bit before this crossroads a path goes towards north, following marble quarries, it reaches the West, and you will fast arrive at the Mountain M. Rossola.

The very beautiful panorama does not only comprise the flat land of Levanto and the Cinque Terre from one part, and the coast of Sestri with the promontory of Portofino from the other, but on clear days you will also see the islands Elba, Capraia and Corsica towards south, the massive of Monviso towards west and the Apuan Alps towards east.

**To Punta Mesco** - 1.30 hours (have a look at the path N. 1) In the village's south you have to follow a path which leads to the promontory passing pine-trees and Mediterranean bush; you reach Semaforo and the rests of the hermitage of S. Antonio 311 m (11th - 14th century, given up at the beginning of the 17th century). From here you can see all five villages of the Cinque Terre.

You can go down to Monterosso al Mare, or go up towards north-west to the Mountain Vé (or Focone) which with its 487 m is the promontory's highest point

**To Montale** - 154 m From the street for Monterosso al Mare you have to turn left which skirts the T. Ghiararo's right edge and which goes up for 4.5 km to Montale. The village, formerly known as "Ceula" was mentioned for the first time in the 6th century.

The legend narrates that Levanto owes its existence to this village which is still able to maintain the characteristics of a rural village.

You can visit the Roman church S. Siro (11th century), the zone's most antique parish; inside it has been restructured several times, and partly restored (1952); it has a baroque front. Inside, in the right ship, you can admire a lunette of the 16th century, tombstone fragments of the late Middle Ages, and a valuable wooden sculpture by Maragliano (Madonna). Next to the church rises up the belfry (a former watch tower with a square basis - 10th century - changed during the baroque period).