

The **Sentiero Azzurro (Blue Path)** connects the five villages of the Cinque Terre, and it is the most famous and appreciated path as it does not consist in particular difficulties. It is almost flat, nevertheless you can enjoy fantastic panoramas. It is possible to cover the whole path, which connects the five villages, by foot going along the path N. 2 (marked in white and red) which passes in the middle of terraced hills, vineyards, and olive-trees, in one moment along the coast, in the other on rocks overhanging the sea. The total time taken for the "journey" is about 5 hours, but obviously the way can be divided in halting-places in every village. Moreover, it is possible to move over the most difficult stretches. In fact, all five villages have their own railway station (except the station of Corniglia all of them are in the village's center), and there are trains about every hour. Furthermore, the five villages are connected with a ferry boat service.

Advices: You can start your trip at Riomaggiore (by train from the railway station of La Spezia ca. 10 minutes) or from Monterosso al Mare (by train from the railway station of La Spezia ca. 30 minutes, from the railway station of Levanto ca. 5 minutes).

Most of the tourists start of at the classic Via dell'Amore (at Riomaggiore) - if you start here, you have the advantage to finish the tour in Monterosso, where you can relax on one of the two wide beaches. If you start instead in Monterosso, you will make the two more difficult stretches at the beginning when you are still rested, and at the end you can relax walking along the Via dell'Amore.

Refreshing oneself swimming in the sea of Riomaggiore is definitively a relief, but you have to pay attention to the rocks of this part of the sea!!! Who is under time pressure should concentrate on the stretches 3 and 4 which are the most beautiful ones, and which offer a wide panorama.

Equipment: The most famous stretch, the so-called Via dell'Amore (Street of Love), between Riomaggiore and Manarola can be covered also with slippers or high heels. For the other stretches we recommend trekking shoes.

The maintenance of the Cinque Terre and the Cinque Terre Card

Different naturalistic catastrophes, and the tourism's increase make it always more difficult and more expensive to maintain the charming paths. That's why it has been decided to ask the "travelers" a contribution in order to keep the paths more feasible.

In this context the **Cinque Terre Card** has been introduced - a useful tool in order to simplify your stay in the Cinque Terre. The Cinque Terre Card allows one:

to carry out an indefinite number of journeys in second class on the trains between Levanto and La Spezia §

to use the services of internal mobility (small pullmans) in every village of the Cinque Terre

to access to all services of the Cinque Terre's National Park (pedestrian routes, equipped areas, elevators, refreshment areas, etc.)

to have a walk along the Via dell'Amore

Costs:

Validity 1 day: € 5,20

Validity 1 day included the ferryboat from Monterosso to Riomaggiore: € 13

Validity 3 days: € 12,40 Validity 7 days: € 19,60

Reductions:

For children up to 12 years and for groups. Residents of one village of the Cinque Terre do not pay.

The whole path can be divided into 4 parts which will be described in the following:



Blue Path - part 1, Riomaggiore - Manarola

Duration: Without rests it will take you ca. 15 minutes to walk along this stretch, but usually you have to calculate about 30 minutes.



The Blue path

Leaving the railway station of Riomaggiore, you will arrive at a small square. Turning right, you will see a tunnel which leads you towards the village's center, the port and the beach; turning left you find the stairs which go up to the famous Via dell'Amore (with a kind of elevator for handicapped persons). The path, excavated in hard rock, winds along the coast on rocks overhanging the sea. The history of the Via dell'Amore is connected to the construction of the railway between Genoa and La Spezia (1926-28). In order to construct a tunnel between Riomaggiore and Manarola two paths on rocks overhanging the sea were necessary.

Once the railway works had been finished, the village's inhabitants understood the possibility of connecting with a short and fast street the two centers of the Cinque Terre. It was constructed a path which was called "Strada Nuova" ("New Street") by the inhabitants. In the course of the years the street was rediscovered by

tourists who got fascinated by the romanticism of these places. That's why it was tried to find a more evocative name, and the street became the "Via dell'Amore" (Street of Love). But time and salt continue to erode and degrade the street, which around 1990 starts to cave in in a lot of stretches. Therefore it was necessary to close the street several times in order to carry out maintenance works.

The works executed during the last closure, took more than a year, and finished in autumn 2001; they make it possible to access to the Via dell'Amore once again. Today, during winter, the path presents itself as a silent and solitary promenade which can be enjoyed with calm, and maybe combined with a good lunch based on fish in one of the typical restaurants of Manarola or Riomaggiore.

During summer the Via dell'Amore's romantic atmosphere gets a bit disturbed by the excessive number of tourists.

Nevertheless we recommend you to have a rest along the street, on one of the numerous benches excavated into the rocks. At the end of the Via dell'Amore, going downstairs, you will arrive at the railway station of Manarola.

Blue Path - part 2, Manarola - Corniglia

Duration: ca. 1 hour

From the railway station of Manarola you arrive at a tunnel which will lead you to the village's center; going down towards the sea, you will arrive at the small port. Going up a quite steep slope, you will reach the "picnic area" from where you have a wonderful view over the village's houses.

Once arrived at the characteristic cemetery, the path continues almost flatly as far as Corniglia. You will be exposed to the sun rays the whole path long, and you will see beautiful beaches which invite you to have a bath. Before you arrive at the railway station of Corniglia, you will reach a bar, a beach with rocks, and then the bungalows of the Holiday Village Europa. You walk along the sea in a height of about 30 m.

A lot of stairs, from where you can enjoy a fantastic panorama, will bring you to Corniglia within 15 minutes (Corniglia is considered the most characteristic village of the Cinque Terre as it is the only one far away from the sea and therefore also from the tourists' influence).

It is worth having a walk in the middle of the narrow side streets which will lead you to a small square high above the sea from where you can admire the whole coast.

Blue Path - part 3, Corniglia - Vernazza

Duration: ca. 1:30 hours

After a stretch of street in asphalt you have to go downstairs on your left, and you will reach once again the path N. 2 which continues between olive -trees, vineyards, Mediterranean bush and farmer houses partly left. On this stretch you have to affront some difficult points, but don't worry: some pieces of shadow will allow you to relax a moment.

Moreover, you will be paid for your toil with a wide panorama. After about 1:30 hours you will arrive above the village of Vernazza which is considered the most beautiful village of the Cinque Terre, and also one of the most spectacular places of the whole Liguria.

So you should have a look from high above at the village protected by the sea, with its characteristic fortress, and the small port.

Going downstairs, you will arrive at the center of Vernazza. The main street leads you to a square with the church Santa Margherita di Antiochia, to a sand beach, and the small port.

Blue Path - part 4, Vernazza - Monterosso al Mare

Duration: 2 hours

The path N. 2 restarts in the center of Vernazza. The stretch which connects it with Monterosso is the most engaging and tiring one, but also the one with the most beautiful panoramas. It starts immediately with a slope that requires quick legs and breath, and within a few minutes you will reach a height of 150 m.

An advice: sometimes turn back in order to see Vernazza once again from high above. You will go up and down between vineyards, and you will cross neglected stretches over antique bridges.

The vegetation is very various, you will find evergreen oaks, arboreal heather, broom, juniper. The path reaches a height of 180 m, and when you see Monterosso, it goes down, and finishes close to the municipality.

Monterosso is the biggest village of the Cinque Terre, and it has two sand beaches, which are connected by a tunnel, that connects also the new part with the village's historical center.