

# The Cinque Terre, Portofino & Lake Maggiore

8 days from £989 April, May & August



This Italian holiday takes you to the millionaires' haunts of Portofino and Santa Margherita Ligure (where you spend four nights), and takes in the spectacular landscapes of the Cinque Terre and Lake Maggiore. Along the way you will travel on the picturesque 'Three Valleys Railway' into the heart of Columbus' maritime city of Genoa.

• 3 nights hb Lago Maggiore, 4 nights hb Santa Margherita Ligure  
• Walk in Italian Lakeland • Walks in Cinque Terre and to Portofino

## PROGRAMME

**DAY ONE:** Flight to Milan, transfer to your hotel on Lake Maggiore for two nights half board accommodation. Transfer times from Malpensa and Bergamo are 45 minutes and 1 ¾ hours respectively.

**DAY TWO:** Half-day walking excursion. You walk to catch the train up the lake. From the station at Fondotoce, you ascend 150m to the little hamlet of Montorfano, which has stunning views over Lake Maggiore. You continue down a gently sloping path to Mergozzo, a small village on the shores of its own little lake. There is time to explore this typical village and have lunch. You catch the train back from here. A gentle walk, approx 2 hours, 150m climb and descent.

**DAY THREE:** Today you travel south by private coach to the Riviera di Levante. Your first stop is Vercelli, a historic town surrounded by paddy-fields (rice is exported worldwide from here). You continue south, stopping for lunch en route, before you arrive at Casella, north of Genoa, to board the 'Three Valleys Train'. In Genoa you will see something of the restored port and old city centre before you complete your journey by coach to the chic resort of Santa Margherita Ligure, where you spend four nights on a half board basis.

Santa Margherita lies in a sheltered bay, close to Portofino. Its harbour is home to many gin-palace luxury yachts. All of this is close to your hotel. Total today 160 miles, mainly motorway.

**DAYS FOUR TO SIX:** In Santa Margherita

with included walking excursions to the Cinque Terre and Portofino, and a free day.

Cinque Terre: The spectacular coastline, hills and villages landscapes of the Cinque Terre are UNESCO-listed and within the National Park, where the mountains drop almost vertically into the sea. Road access is very limited. You walk to the station in Santa Margherita (600m) and take the train to Monterosso (one hour), in the Cinque Terre. After a tour of the old medieval town, you walk to the next village, Vernazza. The trail is narrow; there are many steps built by the local farmers to get to their vineyards and lemon groves. The walk takes about 2 ½ hours with an ascent/descent of 300m.

Once you reach Vernazza, you have time for lunch and to enjoy the best-known town of the National Park. You then continue by train to Manarola (7 minutes) to visit the village and walk a short but spectacular loop (ascent/descent 100m) called "The Vineyards Trail" with breathtaking views of the town and coast. After some free time, you travel back to Santa Margherita by train.

The destination for your third walk is Portofino. You start your day with a walk through Santa Margherita Ligure, admiring its beautiful baroque church and the garden of Villa Durazzo. At the end of the sea promenade you take an old mule path up through the woods for excellent views of the bay. You continue through the woods to

the most spectacular section of the walk, overlooking all the Tigullio Gulf from Sestri Levante (12 miles distant) to Portofino. The trail goes through a valley of the ancient olive mills to finally reach Portofino. Actual walking time is about 3 hours, 4 miles, with 200m of ascent/descent, but you take all morning, with a lunch break in the valley of mills and arrive in Portofino in the early afternoon. Portofino's colourful hotchpotch of fisherman's houses embraces its harbour and the luxury craft of the nearby villa-owners. Above the harbour is Brown's Castle, and there are good views from the church. Weather permitting, you return to Santa Margherita by boat (15-minute trip). If the seas are too choppy, you return by public bus service.

**DAY SEVEN:** You leave Santa Margherita and travel north, following a slightly different route to take in the cathedral city of Pavia. You arrive at Lake Maggiore in the afternoon, for one night, again on a half board basis. Total today 152 miles, mainly motorway.

**DAY EIGHT:** Free time until your transfer to the airport for your return flight.

## YOUR HOTELS

**LAKE MAGGIORE ★★★★★**,  
(first two and last nights)

Accommodation on Lake Maggiore will be in a hotel owned by the Zacchera Hotels Group in the lakeside resorts of Baveno or Stresa.

GRAND HOTEL DINO (Baveno) (<http://grandhoteldino.com/en/>)

HOTEL SIMPLON (Baveno) (<http://hotelsimplon.com/en/>)

HOTEL SPLENDID (Baveno) (<http://hotelsplendid.com/en/>)

GRAND HOTEL BRISTOL (Stresa) (<http://grandhotelbristol.com/en/>)

All hotels are four-star with air-conditioned rooms with safe and minibar, swimming pool (seasonal), wifi, restaurant and bar. Final hotel details will be sent with your travel documentation ten days before departure.

**HOTEL JOLANDA ★★★**,

Santa Margherita Ligure (four nights)

The Hotel Jolanda is ideally located in a quiet street in the heart of Santa Margherita, just 200 yards from the pedestrianised town centre. The boat stop and railway station are 8-10 minutes walk away. Rooms are comfortably furnished with bath/shower, wc, hairdryer, minibar, safety box, and satellite tv. There is a garden area, fitness room, safe, spa area and wifi (charges apply to the last two). ([www.hoteljolanda.it](http://www.hoteljolanda.it))

If you have friends who are not walkers interested in this itinerary, it is featured in our Escorted Holidays brochure with a touring programme.