

Hiking along the picturesque Italian Riviera, who wouldn't want to do it? Well, I certainly did, along with my husband. This is most definitely one of those 'must do' bucket list hikes to experience in Europe.

With the stunningly rugged coastline, endless views, meandering through the vineyards and ending the day with a Campari Spritz while feasting on the delicious Italian food and watching the sun disappear over the horizon. What more could you ask for?

This is hiking heaven! This is the Cinque Terre in Italy!

The view of Vernazza, one of the towns that make up the Cinque Terre.

The history behind the pathways

Cinque means five and Terre means lands. This walk is about the five lands and a region that goes back to the fifteenth century. The walk of the Cinque Terre is a series of old mule pathways that take you through terraced vineyards, olive groves and along the rugged cliffs of the Mediterranean. These paths link the five colourful seaside villages of Corniglia, Riomaggiore, Manarola, Monterosso and Vernazza.

The richness of this region's past is everywhere around you with the land, the people, it's culture and the remarkable buildings. Experiencing this just leaves you awe-inspired, as you can see many relics of the middle ages along the pathways and in the villages. There are beautiful churches and castles along the way, and when you enter the colourful fishing villages, you just stop and think *wow*.

Riomaggiore is the easternmost village of the five in the Cinque Terre.

Planning

When planning this trip, we just added it to the end of our 4-week journey in Europe. The Cinque Terre really only needs 5 to 7 days, so it was a great way to end our trip. Like any hiking adventure you embark on, I strongly suggest research before going. Though this one was an easy one to adapt to and very straightforward.

The view of the pure blue waters of the Mediterranean through the arches.

Accommodation

We chose to stay in one village, Corniglia, for the entire week and we planned our day trips out from this point. It was a great way to do it like this as we had a base point rather than finding different accommodation each night. There are plenty of apartments that you can rent for the time you are there, which is a good accommodation option.

Transport to and from the towns

The region is set up in such a way you have trains linking each of the towns together running on a regular basis. All the hiking paths link the villages together as well, so you can walk from

one village to the next, then catch a train back. Doing it this way makes day tripping so much easier.

La Spezia is the transport hub for the Cinque Terre.

Cinque Terre cards

When you do go, make sure you get the Cinque Terre Cards. There are two different cards available and can be purchased from the welcome centres of the Cinque Terre National Park at varied costs. You have the Cinque Terre Trekking Card and Cinque Terre Treno MS Card. Do note that if you are staying in accommodation for more than a day in Riomaggiore, Vernassa or Monterossa then you should be able to buy at a discounted price, ask your host for details. If you are booking through a tour group, ask the agency about the cards.

Trekking card allows

- Access to the park area
- Some guided visits
- Use of public toilets for free (otherwise it costs €1 - €2)
- Reduced price ticket to see the civic museums in La Spezia
- If there are events on the park's calendar you can have guided visits

Treno MS Card allows

- Second class travel on the regional trains within the route of Levanto and La Spezia
- Access to the park area
- Some guided visits
- Wi-Fi internet connection in the park's hot spots
- Use of public toilets for free (otherwise it costs €1- €2)
- If there are events on the park's calendar you can have guided visits
- Reduced price ticket to see the civic museums in La Spezia

The terrain of this walk will take you through luscious vineyards such as this.

Terrain

The terrain can vary from easy to medium and in some small sections a little bit harder. Be aware you will be walking on narrow pathways with some steep sections where you will have to use your climbing legs. You may have to scramble a bit at times, but most of the time it is relatively easy. There are a lot of stairs to climb on this hike, so be ready for that as well.

If it has been raining then expect it to be slippery and muddy. When the rain comes they do close down some of the trails due to the danger of landslides. While we were there, a few of the trails were closed due to heavy rain so some sections needed to be reassessed by The Cinque Terre National Park before they were reopened, to ensure the safety of the hikers. However, there were still people choosing to walk them even though they were closed. This is NOT recommended for your own safety. Be aware that there are fines given to those who choose to ignore the closures. I would recommend for any information on the updates of the trails to go to the Cinque Terre [official site here](#).



The terraced pathways on the walk can be quite narrow.

Suggested day walks

The walks from village to village varies in length and difficulty. To walk from Corniglia to the next village of Vernazza is around 4km in distance and takes approximately 1.5 hours to complete. After having a snack and coffee in Vernazza you could continue along to the next village of Monterosso, which is a little under 4km. That walk would take around the same length of time as well.

Monterosso being one of the larger villages is a great place to stop and explore, have lunch, a gelato and a swim before jumping on the train back to your original village.



If you need to refuel and relax, Monterosso is the place to do so.

Guide books

There are many books and maps you can buy on the Cinque Terre but to be completely honest you are better off saving your money and getting a map from the [information centre](#) there, as the paths are so well marked as many people walk on them.

If you do however want to explore some of the inland paths as we did, I would advise you to get up-to-date maps from the information centre on these, but again, they are well marked.

Signs and way markers

Like most trails in Europe, you have the red and white striped sign to follow, and the Cinque Terre is no different. There are many signs along the paths with the name of the town you are heading towards along with the time and distance you have to walk to get there.



Look out for the signs to follow along the way.

How to get there

The best way and the easiest is to go by train. There are trains that run from all the major cities in Italy and will link you up to the Cinque Terre. You can check out their transport sites, like this one [here](#) which will give you the specific details.

When to go

They say between mid-March to the end of October, but I would recommend going June, July, August for the best weather conditions. There is less rain and more beautiful days, however, if you don't like crowds then choose the earlier or later months.

The European summer begins in late June and goes through to late September, so keep in mind that many Europeans love heading to the coast during this time!

A comfy day pack, hiking poles and good boots will get you through the walk.

What to take

- A good pair of hiking shoes. It's not recommended to hike in sandals, thongs or pumps as if you do - you may receive a fine.
- Carry a comfortable day hiking pack as you will want to carry wet weather gear, a warm jacket and water.
- Don't forget to put in the all-important bathers and a towel for a swim.
- Hiking poles work well in this terrain and really assists in those steep ups and downs.
- Bring a camera as the views are simply picture perfect even on a cloudy day.

Looking back at the beautiful village of Corniglia.

In my opinion, this is one of the must-do hikes that should be on your bucket list. The Cinque Terre offers so much more than just hiking.

To be able to experience the history, culture, food and wine of this region whilst taking in some of the most spectacular scenery that Mediterranean Italy can offer was just incredible.

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