

Riviera of the Rising Sun: Liguria 1 (Genoa to Sestri Levante)

This 8 days/7 nights walk takes you along the first half of the Riviera di Levante (the Riviera of the Rising Sun) walk. It starts in the Genoa (Italy's largest port, a marvellously eclectic city full of pace and rough-edged style) and finishes in the charming resort town of Sestri Levante. The trail follows a rugged arc of coastline above the Mediterranean Sea. It is regularly dotted with small fishing towns and ports that have managed to gain some purchase in the mouths of rivers and streams that have cut through the mountains.

Liguria is a region steeped in maritime history: seafaring, shipbuilding and fishing. The traditional houses that line the waterfronts are high (seven or eight stories) crowding around the ports to maximise the land. They are typically painted in bright colours so that the fishermen and sailors could spot their homes from the sea. Ancient trails have connected the villages and towns for centuries, while higher routes have carried trade between Italy and France since Roman times. Many of these have been restored and waymarked. They take you through terraced farmlands, vineyards and olive groves, staying in bustling Genoa, sleepy fishing villages and some of Italy's fanciest resorts, including Portofino. With its blend of sea, mountains and forest, the Riviera of the Rising Sun offers some of Italy's finest coastal walks.

The walks:

The tour starts with a fascinating 'urban walk' that takes you through the heart of Genoa, the lanes and alleys of the old port, the boulevards of the commercial centre and out along the foreshore to the city's first winter resort. From here you climb up into the hills, picking up the marked trail that will take you all the way to Sestri Levante, five days later. One of the characteristics of the route is its flexibility: all the towns are connected by regular local trains, which means you can hop on and off the train to shorten the longer legs. For these reasons, we have classified the Riviera of the Rising Sun as a Grade 2 walk ("*several walks on this tour are between 12 and 15 kms; orientation is straight forward and there are some long climbs*").

The accommodation:

You will stay in a variety of accommodation: fancy 4-star hotels, comfortable 3-star hotels and a lovely family run 'agriturismo', which has its own restaurant and swimming pool. The accommodation is comfortable and welcoming, and we use the best available in each place.

Food:

Like its inhabitants, the food of Ligurian is austere and reserved, based on the finest ingredients hard won from the rocky slopes of the Apennine Mountains and the blue waters of the Mediterranean Sea. The classic dishes are pesto (a basil, pine-nut and garlic paste, traditionally served with a local short pasta and diced potato); focaccia (a dimpled, rustic bread served with herbs and lashing of the excellent local olive oil) and farinata (a delicious flat-bread made from chic peas with more olive oil). There is an abundance of very good seafood, complemented with very good, locally grown vegetables. The most celebrated wines of the region are dry whites (Cinque Terre and Vermentino) but Liguria also produces some good reds (Rossese di Dolceacqua, Ormeasco and Colli di Luni Rosso).

Inclusions:

- seven nights' accommodation
- all breakfasts (and dinners, if chosen)
- recommendations for lunch and dinners
- reading lists and historical and cultural notes
maps and detailed walking instructions
- daily transfers of baggage between hotels
- 24 hour backup from local manage

Please note, there is a shorter version on this walk (6 days/5 nights, Camogli to Sestri Levante). Click here for details.

Riviera of the Rising Sun: Liguria 1

Day 1:

Staying in a comfortable hotel in the medieval centre of Genoa, your first day is an opportunity to explore the treasures of a city that once ruled the Mediterranean and was known for centuries as La Superba (the Proud). Genoa preserves many relics of its ancient and honourable history, including numerous palaces and magnificent art collections of its maritime families, as well as its colourful old port.

Day 2:

The first section of today's walk starts from Genoa's port, an 'urban walk' through the lanes and alleys of the old city and the commercial centre of the city to a coastal promenade which takes you to the edge of the city, arriving at seaside resort that was founded in 1863. *There is the option to shorten the walk by taking the train from this point.* **10 kms, 2 hours**

The second section follows *creuze de ma* (traditional country lanes lined with drystone walls) crossing a stone medieval bridge before climbing into the foothills of the Apennines, enjoying spectacular views along the coast to the promontory of Portofino (230 mts asl) before descending to a picturesque fishing village, where you'll spend the night. **5 kms, 1.5 hours**

Day 3:

This first section of the walk follows *creuze de ma* up through hamlets to the ridge of Monte Croce (300 mts asl). It continues along the ridge before coming down a narrow valley to another cute fishing village. *There is the option to shorten the walk by taking the train from this point.* **6.5 kms, 2 hours**

The second leg is straight forward, following lanes and marked trails but it also involve two steep climbs, the first to a parish church (280 mts asl) and the second a hill on the last section (150 mts asl) but the effort is rewarded by the wide views before arriving in the busy little port of Camogli. **8 kms, 3 hours**

Day 4:

Today you leave Camogli, walking along the spectacular coastline on the western edge of the Portofino National Park with vast views across the Gulf of Genoa before climbing up into forest, then winding your way down to the stunning little village of Portofino, one of the most celebrated spots on the Italian Riviera. **8 kms, 3 hrs**

Day 5:

This morning you head out of Portofino along a lovely path that winds above the coast passing through olive groves with views over bays and hidden villas to the elegant resort town of Santa Margherita Ligure. You then continue on to a neighbouring busy port, picking up a pilgrim trail and entering the town over a Roman bridge that Hannibal himself reputedly crossed. **11 kms, 3.5 hrs**

Day 6:

This walk starts with a 15-minute funicular ride from the port up to one of the holiest religious sanctuaries in the area, founded in the 16th century 600 mts above the coast. This straight-forward, well-marked walk takes you from the sanctuary along a descending ridge line through beautiful oak and chestnut forests to a bustling town of with an arcaded medieval centre. **10 kms, 3 hours**

Day 7:

Today, the trial takes you along the sea front to the neighbouring town before picking up the pilgrim trail again and climbing up into the hills along an old paved trail to a ruined church with breath-taking views down over Sestri Levante and the Bay of Silences, your final destination. **11 kms, 4 hours**

Day 8:

Sestri Levante is on the Genoa/La Spezia line well serviced by regular trains in either direction (including to the Cinque Terre, three stops away to the east).