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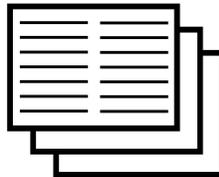
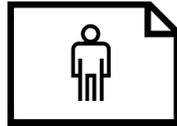
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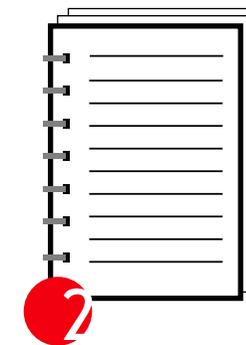
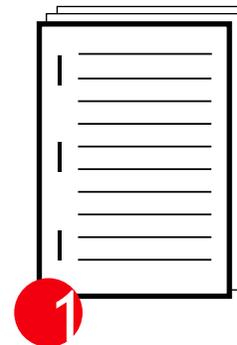
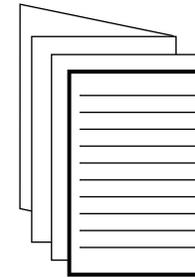
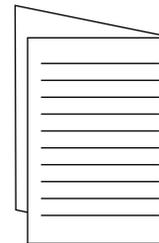
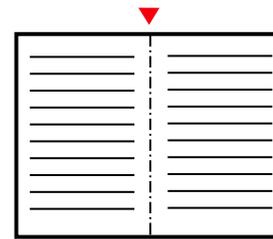
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assembling the guide



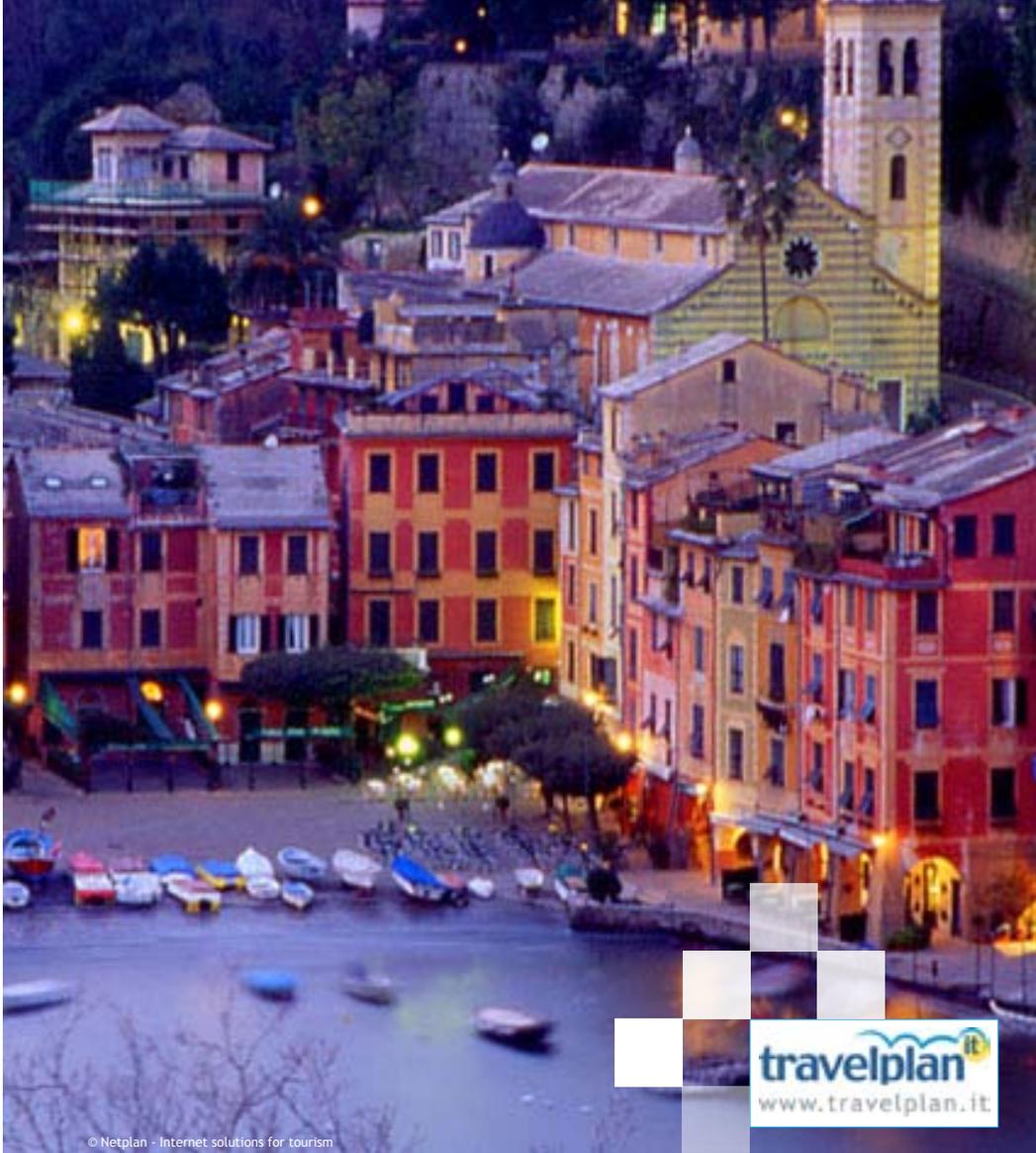
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THE PORTOFINO & TIGULLIO GULF CITY GUIDE





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Getting there



Portofino: the Gulf seen from Portofino

The Tigullio Gulf is easy to reach thanks to a convenient rail and road network and its proximity to two international airports.

By car:

From Rome or Florence take the A11 Firenze-mare motorway, then take the A12 towards Genoa. From Milan take the A7 Milan-Genoa motorway and continue along the A12 towards La Spezia. From Venice or Bologna take the A1 Bologna-Milan motorway to Parma, then take the A15 to La Spezia and continue along the A12 towards Genoa.

By train:

The Tigullio Gulf is on the Genoa-La Spezia rail line, with numerous trains running daily. Trains leave from Genoa's Piazza Principe station. There are several direct trains from Turin, Milan and Rome. From Florence, change at Pisa. All coastal towns can be accessed by rail, with the exception of Portofino, which can be reached by shuttle bus service from Santa Margherita. For timetables and information see www.trenitalia.it.

History and culture



Rapallo: the Castle

The history of Tigullio Gulf towns is very ancient, with necropolis remains found in several locations dating back to pre-Roman times, when the region was inhabited by the ancient Ligurians. Numerous wars between Rome and the Ligurian people between the 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. led to Roman domination of the region.

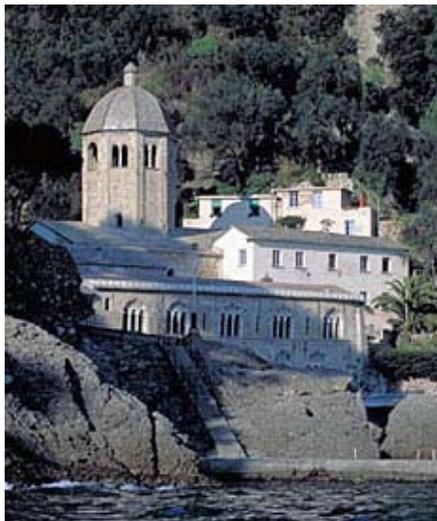
Yet it was not until the Middle Ages that Tigullian towns acquired their prestige. In the 11th and 12th centuries, Rapallo and other towns stood by Genoa in its battle against Pisa, and in the first crusade. Since then, the settlements in the Tigullian area were taken under the power of Genoa and maintained political links with the city until modern times.

From the end of the 11th century to the end of the 18th Genoa was a Republican oligarchy, governed by consuls chosen from the most influential families. Thanks to this form of government, which guaranteed the interests of the most powerful classes, for around

five centuries Genoese territories flourished throughout the Mediterranean, in the form of trade centres and colonies. The crusades also contributed to Genoa's role as maritime leader in the Mediterranean area throughout the subsequent centuries.

In 1805 Napoleon annexed the whole of Liguria to the French Empire, but just ten years later, the Congress of Vienna decreed that the ancient Republic of Genoa should be annexed to the Kingdom of Sardinia, belonging to the House of Savoy, which was to become part of unified Italy a few decades later. In the meantime the tourism potential of this coastline became apparent and forever marked the character of the area.

Places and charm



Portofino: San Fruttuoso Abbey

PORTOFINO

In a tiny creek, out of sight and almost inaccessible, is hidden an ancient fishing village, that has become an internationally renowned symbol. Until the 19th century, Portofino was a fishing village, the bay was a well-known safe haven for ships, and the promontory served as an outpost for coastal sightings. At the end of the 19th century, all over Europe, the middle classes and aristocracy began to choose this beautiful place to build their summer residences. Now, since the 1950s, Portofino has received big Hollywood names, great artists, politicians and entrepreneurs, making it famous all over the world.

- **Places to see:** the town square, symbol of Portofino, with its coloured houses and the marina with its fairytale yachts. The church of Saint Martin in the town centre is also worth a visit. Going up towards the promontory you come to the church and castle of **Saint George**, and further along the way you can see **Brown Castle**, immersed

in magnificent gardens. All around, dozens of dream villas are dotted among the olive trees. For nature lovers, the ideal excursion is through the **Portofino Natural Park**, which provides a network of paths heading towards the mountain or halfway down the coast, with breathtaking views from the promontory. For scuba divers, the reef is a natural paradise. This is the heart of the **Protected Marine Area of Portofino**, with its underwater cliffs and Posidonia beds. The park is the territory of red coral, which has found ideal conditions to develop. Scuba divers can also visit the wreckage of the Mohawk Deer and the Genova.

SAN FRUTTUOSO

Set in a cove in Capodimonte Bay, at the centre of the Protected Marine Area of Portofino lies one of the most beautiful and renowned corners of Italy. A tiny fishing village flanked by the ancient **San Fruttuoso Abbey** and the Doria tower. Construction of the abbey dates back to the 1013th centuries, but before that, a hermitage had stood there, built by Spanish monks from Tarragona, who had brought the relics of the martyr bishop, San Fruttuoso. For centuries, San Fruttuoso belonged to the Princes of Doria, who built splendid family tombs there in the 13th century.

- Visit the monastery complex of the 10-11th century with its cloisters, chapter house, church and Doria tombs. San Fruttuoso can only be reached by boat from Camogli and all Tigullio towns, or on foot from Portofino and Camogli.

CAMOGLI

A charming townlet rising west of Mount Portofino. The famous ancient port is one of the best-loved scenes in Italy, with its brightly coloured houses standing tall around the docks. In the centre, amid the port, the beach and the alleyways you can hear

the hum of restaurants and shops. Camogli's wealth long pre-dates tourism. For centuries the town enjoyed seasons of great wealth thanks to its famous shipowners and artisans. Camogli was home to one of the most renowned creators of velvet and brocade, exported all over the Mediterranean. Sumptuous houses bear witness to this ancient splendour, some rising as high as six floors, with trompe-l'oeil facades. Camogli is also famous for its **fish festival**.

- **Places to see:** Let yourself wander through the old "carruggi" (alleys) of the town centre, right up to the promontory and the church of Santa Maria Assunta, with its baroque interior, and Dragonara Castle. Camogli marks the western border of the **Portofino Natural Park**, which offers numerous panoramic paths between the mountain and the sea. Also: don't miss **San Fruttuoso Abbey**.

SANTA MARGHERITA LIGURE

One of the most important towns of the Levante Riviera is Santa Margherita, an elegant international tourist destination with a unique atmosphere. Nestling around the port, its special charm lies in the unusual mix of nautical and Belle Epoque styles. The town had already developed by the Middle Ages, but only began to thrive in the 17th century, when the Genoese nobility built beautiful villas there. In the 19th century it began to attract visitors from all over Europe. Today the town has many hotels and seaside facilities.

There is a wide variety of sports on offer, with numerous boat-hiring facilities, a sailing club and several diving centres.

- **Places to see:** Don't miss **Villa Durazzo Centurione**, built at the end of the 16th century and surrounded by spectacular Italian gardens. The baroque Santa Margherita di Antiochia

Basilica is also worth a visit, which houses numerous works of Genoese artists. We recommend a trip to the **Bay of Paraggi**, with the only sandy beach in the area, and a spectacular variety of sea fauna and a wreck dating back to 1917.

RAPALLO

Rapallo is the largest town on the Levante Riviera, although it is not as well-known as nearby Portofino and Santa Margherita. The town has the typical aristocratic quality of the Riviera, seen in the villas and large hotels built from the 19th century. The oldest part of the centre has held on to its characteristic maritime feel, with steep narrow alleys buzzing with shops and cafes. **Today Rapallo** is an international tourist centre, with beautiful beaches, stylish hotels, conference centres, two leisure ports, an 18-hole golf course and numerous sports facilities.

- **Places to see:** The Castle overlooking the sea, built by the Genoese in 1550 is definitely worth a visit, so too are the churches of San Gervasio and San Protasio. Renowned for its lace, Rapallo has opened the **Museum of Lace** with over 1400 pieces of rare and precious antique lacework on display. From Rapallo, we recommend a trip to the **Montalegre Sanctuary**, an important place of prayer. The sanctuary stands 600 metres above the sea and provides a magnificent view of the Gulf. Rapallo can be reached by cable car or on foot (1 hour hike).

CHIAVARI

During the Middle Ages it was an important stronghold for the Genoese against the powerful Fieschi fiefdom, based in nearby Lavagna.

Chiavari is today an elegant but modest town that lives off trade and craftwork (its chairs are renowned) and becomes a thriving

holiday destination in summer, thanks also to its modern leisure port.

- **Places to see:** The ancient centre distinguishes itself from others in the Tigullio area for its neoclassical and 18th century architecture. **The heart of Chiavari** is Via Martiri della Liberazione (the straight “carruggio”, or alley) with its porticos and host of shops. Don’t miss the 17th century cathedral of Nostra Signora dell’Orto, with plenty of works of art. Wander among the beautiful palazzos and churches in the centre to Palazzo Rocca, home to the **Chiavari botanical park**. The park is divided into different areas and has been enhanced with caves, lakes and bridges.

A slight detour will take you to Cogorno and the **Fieschi Basilica**. It is one of the most important medieval monuments in Liguria, built in the 13th century by request of Pope Innocent IV, a member of the Fieschi family. Near the basilica are the medieval palazzo of the Earls of Fieschi and the remains of a 16th century house.

SESTRI LEVANTE

One of the most photographed views of the Riviera: two bays separated by an isthmus bearing the ancient town of Sestri. Not much is left to testify to Sestri’s ancient history, but the town certainly merits a visit by anyone willing to be enchanted by the poetry of its setting and its two bays: the **Bay of Fables**, with modern seaside facilities, and the smaller **Bay of Silence**, so named by the famous fairy tale writer, Hans Christian Andersen. On the neck of land that separates the two bays rises the 12th century church of Saint Nicholas, while other historical villas around the town have been converted into hotels.

A great number of **water sports** can be enjoyed on Sestri’s beaches, from sailing to windsurfing, swimming to diving. The inland is great for hiking or mountain bike excursions.

MONEGLIA

A tiny town set between two promontories, suspended between the intense blue of the sea and the lush green mountains. The atmosphere is peaceful and perfect for quiet contemplation of the wondrous landscape. The village is flanked on either side by two castles: the 12th century **fortress of Monleone** and the renaissance **Villafranca Castle**, open to the public. In the middle lies the characteristic marine village, with its narrow streets and slate roofs. You can browse around Santa Croce church, which dates back to the 11th century.

Moneglia has a **beautiful beach** with various facilities where it is also possible to hire boats. A diving centre is also available for immersions along the beautiful cliffs.

Eating and drinking



Portofino: Pasta al Pesto

Tigullio gastronomy is mostly based on traditional Mediterranean cooking. Ligurian cuisine boasts a number of simple ingredients that seem somewhat meek when taken singly, but which, when combined, exalt each others qualities to create a final harmonious symphony of flavours. These are: mushrooms, pine nuts, walnuts and lots of herbs.

All recipes include Ligurian olive oil, delicately flavoured and ideal for creating delicious sauces. The most famous of these, both in Italy and abroad, is **pesto**, a sauce made of basil, pine nuts, garlic, olive oil and Parmesan cheese. **Salsa verde**, with parsley and pine nuts, is an ideal accompaniment to meat, whereas pasta and ravioli revel in walnut sauce.

Focaccias and pies are typically Ligurian. These are eaten at mealtimes or as tasty snacks: whether its a plain oil focaccia, or with a scrumptious cheese filling, its hard to resist the fragrance and aroma of this speciality. Nor can you leave without trying

a **farinata**, a special focaccia made of gram flour. **Torta pasqualina** is the most famous of Liguria’s numerous pies, and is made of layers of puff pastry filled with chard, ricotta herbs and eggs. Or there is mushroom pie and thousands of other vegetable fillings!

A variety of **pasta shapes** can accompany the renowned pesto or a meat sauce: **troffie**, **trenette**, **taglierini** etc. Highly recommended are the numerous and varied types of ravioli. The most unusual are **pansotti**, ravioli with a vegetable and herb filling, delicious with walnut sauce. To conclude we mention a classic soup; **mesciua** made of boiled chickpeas, beans and spelt grains.

Typical Ligurian **meat dishes** include **tomaselle**, a beef roulade with a meat, egg and herb filling, or lamb stew with artichokes. Mushrooms play a leading role on the table in the inland, giving their special flavour to meat dishes and sometimes even associated with fish.

And **fish** is the star feature on the menu in Tigullian restaurants. A wealth of recipes is on offer: mixed fried fish, fish salad, mullet **alla Genovese**, sweet and sour stockfish with pine nuts and raisins. Mussels are to be found in all kinds of guises: **alla marinara**, meat-filled, with cheese, eggs, marjoram. And we must not forget the queen of the Ligurian seas: the anchovy, eaten fresh, excellent when filled, but also first-rate when pickled.

Wine: The **Cinque Terre** are one of the most spectacular winegrowing areas in the world, with vines lined up on terraces overhanging the sea. An excellent wine is obtained: **Cinque Terre DOC**, dry with a delicate fragrance, it is the ideal accompaniment to fish specialities. The prestigious **Sciacchetrà** is another great meditation wine with an intense aroma. There are many more wines to savour in Liguria, mostly whites, such as Pigato, Vermentino and Colli di Luni.

Shopping



Tigullio: lac and macramè

All the towns in the Tigullio area are well equipped to satisfy the growing tourist demand for shopping.

The picturesque town centres are pedestrianized to enable inhabitants and tourists to stroll serenely in search of their ideal purchase.

On the second weekend of the month, Chiavari is host to a crowded antique market. Moreover, on the fourth Sunday of every month, the centre of Rapallo is also visited by stalls selling antiques and bric-à-brac ware.

Local craftsmen propose precious goods. Chiavari is famous for its **quality furniture**.

At the beginning of the 19th century the Chiavari chair came into being, an innovative model still very much appreciated by a vast public today.

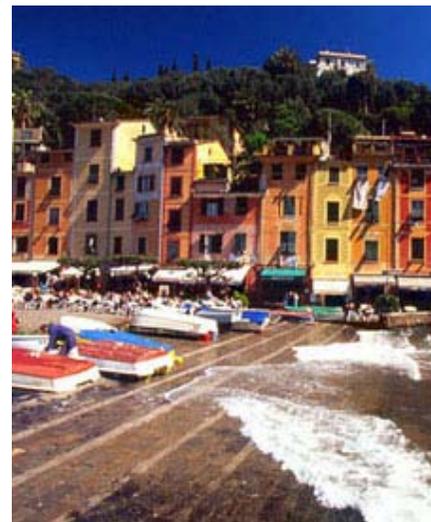
Liguria boasts a tradition of at least 700 years of **damask** production. The hand-woven production of these silk fabrics is still alive in the Tigullio area today.

In Rapallo, Portofino and Santa Margherita **lace and macramè** are still widespread.

The typical activity of the inland is slate extraction and processing.

Today slate is used for construction, and in artistic craftwork to create beautiful objects and sculptures.

Hotels and lodging



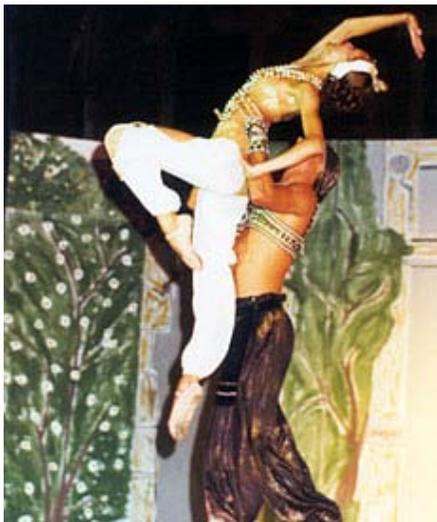
Portofino: Piazzeta di Portofino

Portofino and the Tigullio Gulf offer an incredible choice of accommodation suitable for all needs and budgets. If you'd prefer to stay in a hotel, you can choose from a large selection of **Tigullio hotels**, ranging from the more basic 1-star to 5-star luxury hotels. Travelplan offers a wide choice of **hotels in Portofino**, **hotels in Santa Margherita**, **hotels in Rapallo** and various other localities.

If you'd like a more economic solution, without saying no comfort, you can opt for a pleasant **bed-and-breakfast in the Tigullio area**. If you are planning a longer stay, why not rent an **apartment or villa in the Portofino area**.

Nature lovers are spoilt for choice: there are now numerous **farm-stay accommodations in the Tigullio area**, in magnificent locations in the mountains behind the coast, perhaps with a panoramic view over the sea.

Events



Rapallo: Rapallo Danza

The Tigullio coast is brimming with all kinds of events, especially in the summer: village festivals, concerts, art exhibitions, dance, theatre, regattas. The calendar changes from year to year, so you are advised to contact the tourist information office in each locality. Travelplan proposes a list of the main events taking place every year.

Sailing regattas. The Gulf of Tigullio has long been a privileged nautical centre. Here the regatta season goes on all year long. Don't miss the **Zegna Trophy**, which takes place in **Portofino** in May.

The **Tigullio Exhibition**, Chiavari, May. In 2006 the Tigullio Exhibition will be celebrating its 150th anniversary. This important fair presents the best of traditional Ligurian handicrafts, with a variety of excellent products from wood to fabrics, from lace to slate, and, naturally, examples of the regions famous gastronomy.

Palco sul Mare, the most anticipated travelling festival of the summer, proposes big concerts and favourite celebrities from the Italian cabaret scene.

Events are held in the town squares of: Portofino, Sestri Levante, Moneglia, Lavagna, Santa Margherita Ligure, Camogli, Chiavari, Rapallo and Zoagli.

Valle Christi International Festival is hosted by **Rapallo** in the Valle Christi Monument Complex among the monastery ruins. A quality programme includes music, theatre and dance. Shows are concentrated in about thirty days between the first half of July and the first half of August.

Concerts in San Fruttuoso Abbey, Camogli: various dates in July and August. A season of concerts that is much appreciated by public and critics alike, held in the cloisters of San Fruttuoso Abbey, a striking setting, reachable only on foot or by boat.

Sagra del Pesce (Fish festival), Camogli, on the second Sunday in May. Held in honour of the patron saint of fishermen, San Fortunato, thousands of visitors flock to the port of Camogli around a giant frying pan measuring 4 metres in diameter. For a whole day, fishermen and chefs serve up fresh fish to the public. Camogli is completely closed to private traffic on the day of the festival. To get there, take a train or tourist ferry.

"Rapallo Danza" International Ballet Festival in **Rapallo** takes place on four Sundays in July and August in the open-air theatre of Villa Tigullio. Four appointments with stars from the world of international ballet and modern dance. **Christ of the Abyss, Camogli.** On the seabed

of San Fruttuoso, 12 metres below the surface, lies the enormous bronze sculpture of Christ of the Abyss, patron saint of scuba divers. On the last Saturday in July, one of the most unusual processions in the world is held at night time, when dozens of scuba divers go down to the statue with special torches and place a crown of laurels on the head of Christ. The descent is preceded by a procession of torch-lit boats.

La Dolce Vita



Portofino: the harbour

Portofino and the other charming villages of the Tigullio region have always attracted artists, intellectuals, the nobility, sovereigns and simple travellers, for the peace and tranquillity of the bay, the striking landscape and the environment.

A host of illustrious names have fallen for the climate and the beauties of the Gulf of Tigullio, from Nietzsche to Hesse, Wagner, Kandinsky, Freud, Hemingway, Eleonora Duse and D'Annunzio. Guy de Maupassant used to moor his yacht, the *Bel Ami*, in the marina.

Since the 1950s, **Portofino** has been the symbol of the Dolce Vita, an exclusive and elegant arena in which to meet stars from show business, great names from the fashion industry and the international economic elite.

The Sweet Life can be seen among the boutiques of the historical centre, the bars in the famous **Piazzetta**, the restaurants of **Calata Marconi** or the yachts moored to the Umberto I Wharf, with paparazzi always on the lookout for a scoop. The end the night in

style, stop off at *Covo di Nordest* in Paraggi, which for years has been the Riviera's favourite nightclub.

Rapallo and **Santa Margherita** live an intense life around their tourist ports: entertainment, folklore and sport, particularly sailing. The atmosphere is the refined, trendy mood of the tourist elite. Classical music concerts, antiques fairs, parties, and a wealth of nightspots and restaurants where you can relish the flavour of local prawns, one of the many marine specialities of the area. Rapallo regularly organises cultural events, and has a famous **18-hole golf** course bordering the ruins of an ancient 13th century monastery.

Chiavari and **Sestri Levante** are other localities on the Ligurian Riviera whose nightlife may not rival Portofino or Santa Margherita, but which is certainly not to be missed. *Piscina dei Castelli*, in the marina of Sestri Levante, is a nightclub famous for its pulsing nightlife, visited by night owls from all over northern Italy. Not far from here, in **Riva Trigoso** is the popular *Bunker Bar*, where people go to dance the night away on the beach.

The Cinque Terre



Cinque Terre: Vernazza

Cinque Terre are precisely five enchanting medieval villages clutching on to a breathtaking coastline, down slopes that lead rapidly to the shore. A marvellous sight. Over the centuries, Man has shaped the landscape, eking out just enough space from the ungenerous terrain to create precious land for cultivation. Thus were born the terraces descending towards the sea, with vine or olive cultivations, held up by almost 7000km of stonewalling. Beneath the cultivations, clutching on to the rock and the sea, rise five villages, intact, in a characteristic maze of colourful houses. Unesco has nominated the Cinque Terre a World Heritage Site, and the Italian State has created the **National Park of the Cinque Terre** to ensure their preservation.

The best way to understand this region is to walk through it, along the **dense network of trails and muletracks** that were once the only means of access. There are 21 trails to explore in the Park, one of which runs along the coast and links up all five villages.

The Cinque Terre are also an ideal place for lovers of the sea: the coast is dotted with cliffs, bays, beaches and caves. The sea floor is rich and varied, a paradise for scuba divers, thanks also to three fascinating underwater itineraries designed by the Park.

The itinerary can be done in a couple of days but it is worth staying longer to explore the villages and the National Park along the unforgettable hiking trails suspended above the coast, on foot, horseback or mountain bike. For an enchanting stay you can choose from several **hotels in Cinque Terre**, or the simple and discreet charm of a **Cinque Terre inn**. For those looking for something different, there is an excellent selection of inviting **rooms or bed-and-breakfasts in Cinque Terre**, set in the charming towns looking out over the sea.

How to get there: The easiest way to get to the Cinque Terre is **by train**, thanks to frequent services along the Genoa-La Spezia line. If you are coming **by car**, take the A12 motorway, exit at Brugnato for Vernazza and Monterosso, or exit at La Spezia for Riomaggiore and Manarola. The roads are very narrow and winding, suitable only for expert drivers. But the most picturesque way to arrive is **by boat**. During the summer there is a daily ferry service between Cinque Terre and Portovenere and the Gulf of Tigullio.

- **Monterosso** is the first village coming from Genoa and the only one to have a beach. The village holds the remains of ancient Genoese fortifications and the convent of Saint Francis dating back to the 17th century, which houses a number of paintings of significant value, such as a crucifixion from the Van Dyck school. Don't forget to taste the most famous product: Sciacchetrà raisin wine.

- **Vernazza** is the only real port in the Cinque Terre. It preserves part of the imposing Genoese defence walls and the beautiful

church of Santa Margherita di Antiochia, built on a rocky spur. It is marvellous to wander through the narrow streets and up and down the steep stairways of this charming townlet. Ask the local diving centre about the wonderful rocky seafloor.

- **Corniglia** hangs above a rocky promontory overlooking the sea, surrounded by a basin of vines. It is reminiscent of the farmland further away from the Ligurian coast. Don't miss Saint Peter's church, built in 1334 in Genoese gothic style with later reworkings from the baroque period.

- **Manarola** is perhaps the most striking of the Cinque Terre. The houses are built sheer above the sea and descend towards the marina, suspended between two rocky spurs and inhabited by brightly coloured boats. Manarola is the starting point of the famous Lovers Lane or "Via dell'Amore", a path leading to Riomaggiore, sheer above the sea.

- **Riomaggiore** Legend has it that was founded by Greek refugees in the 8th century. The village is set out in two formations of brightly coloured houses. The church of Saint John the Baptist has a beautiful gothic facade and a splendid rose window from the 14th century, while above the village lie the ruins of a castle. However, the most fascinating part of Riomaggiore are its houses, tall and narrow, with entrances on different levels at the front and back.

The Cinque Terre boasts yet another striking itinerary, albeit little publicised: "Via dei Santuari". It goes from Monterosso to Riomaggiore winding its way to the ancient sanctuaries built on the mountain by the devout inhabitants of these lands.

The Gulf of Poets



Lerici: San Terenzo Castle

The Gulf of Poets is snuggled between two promontories between which lies the city of La Spezia.

All around an amphitheatre of hills and mountains forms a scenic backdrop. The high, jagged coastline hugs peaceful bays in protection against the wind, where enchanting little ancient towns take their stand.

The beauty of these places has been celebrated by poets, writers and artists, who have long been attracted to this coast and the savage sweetness of its landscape and climate.

This itinerary can be done in a couple of days, but it is worth staying overnight to calmly explore the gulf villages or even relax in the sun on one of the Gulf beaches.

You can choose from many **hotels in Lerici and Portovenere** or you might decide to go for the simple and discreet charm of a **typical inn**.

For those looking for something different, there's an excellent selection of inviting **bed-and-breakfasts in Lerici and Portovenere**.

How to get there: The Gulf of Poets can be reached via the A12 motorway, to La Spezia, then following directions for Portovenere or Lerici. If you are coming by train, get off at La Spezia, then take the public transport service. There is a sea service in the summer that links La Spezia with the Gulf localities.

- **Portovenere** is a fortified town with Genoese influences rising high from the end of a promontory amidst a unique landscape. The town has received World Heritage status from Unesco. It is dominated by Doria castle, which is open to visitors. From the hill, the narrow "carruggi" or alleys go down to the sea. On the tip of the promontory exquisite Portovenere stands proud, with Saint Peter's church, built in 1277 in Genoese gothic style, with alternating bands of black and white stone. The **Island of Palmaria** lies in front of Portovenere and is well worth a visit. A rocky, triangular-shaped island, today it is a natural park, boasting cliffs, coves and charming little beaches.

- **La Spezia** is a modern-looking city with a nineteenth-century feel and a matrix of wide roads, gardens and art nouveau architecture. This urban design is the result of a radical change to the city occurring in the second half of the 1800s, when the Savoys built the large Maritime Military Arsenal. Today, La Spezia is still the most important naval base in Italy. The city has a remarkable wealth of museum resources of which Travelplan recommends the new **CAMeC**, museum of modern and contemporary art, and the Naval Museum.

- **Lerici** stretches out over the eastern side of the Gulf. An Etruscan city and an important port of call in Roman times, in the Middle Ages it was long the bone of contention between the Pisans and the Genoese. In the 17th and 18th centuries noble shipowning families built luxury palazzos and villas there. In the 1800s Lerici was the favourite destination of the English literati; Mary Shelley and D. H.

Lawrence lived here. The village is dominated by **the Castle**, considered one of the most beautiful in the whole of Liguria. It was built in several stages between the 13th and 14th centuries and remains in excellent condition. Inside it houses the fascinating **Museum of Geo-Palaeontology**, with reconstructions of prehistoric scenes, reproductions of dinosaurs, marine and land fossils and a seismic simulation room.

Lerici is one of the favourite destinations of **sea sport enthusiasts**. In the protected and ventilated bay you can see dozens of sailing boats, windsurfers, canoes and catamarans. All along the coast are superb views of reefs alternating with small stony or sandy beaches. The shoreline is clean and well-looked after. Many beaches along the coast have been awarded the **Blue Flag**.

Just ahead of Lerici lies the characteristic town of **San Terenzo**, beautifully positioned above the bay. Don't miss the 15th century castle, which houses a museum dedicated to Shelley. The castles of Saint Terenzo and Lerici are connected by a pretty walk.

The last stop on our itinerary is the medieval village of **Tellaro** rising up on the rocky tip of the eastern extremity of the Gulf. The townlet is a real jewel of Ligurian town planning: the walls surround the village with its narrow "carruggi" or alleys and pastel-coloured tower-houses, while the church of Saint George, dating back to the 1500s, dominates the village square.

Before you leave the Gulf of Poets don't forget to try **two sea specialities** that are particularly delicious in these parts. Mussels, cultivated for over a century in the waters of Portovenere, and the exquisite Tellaro octopus. Why not wash it all down with a dry white wine from the Cinque Terre or Colli di Luni?



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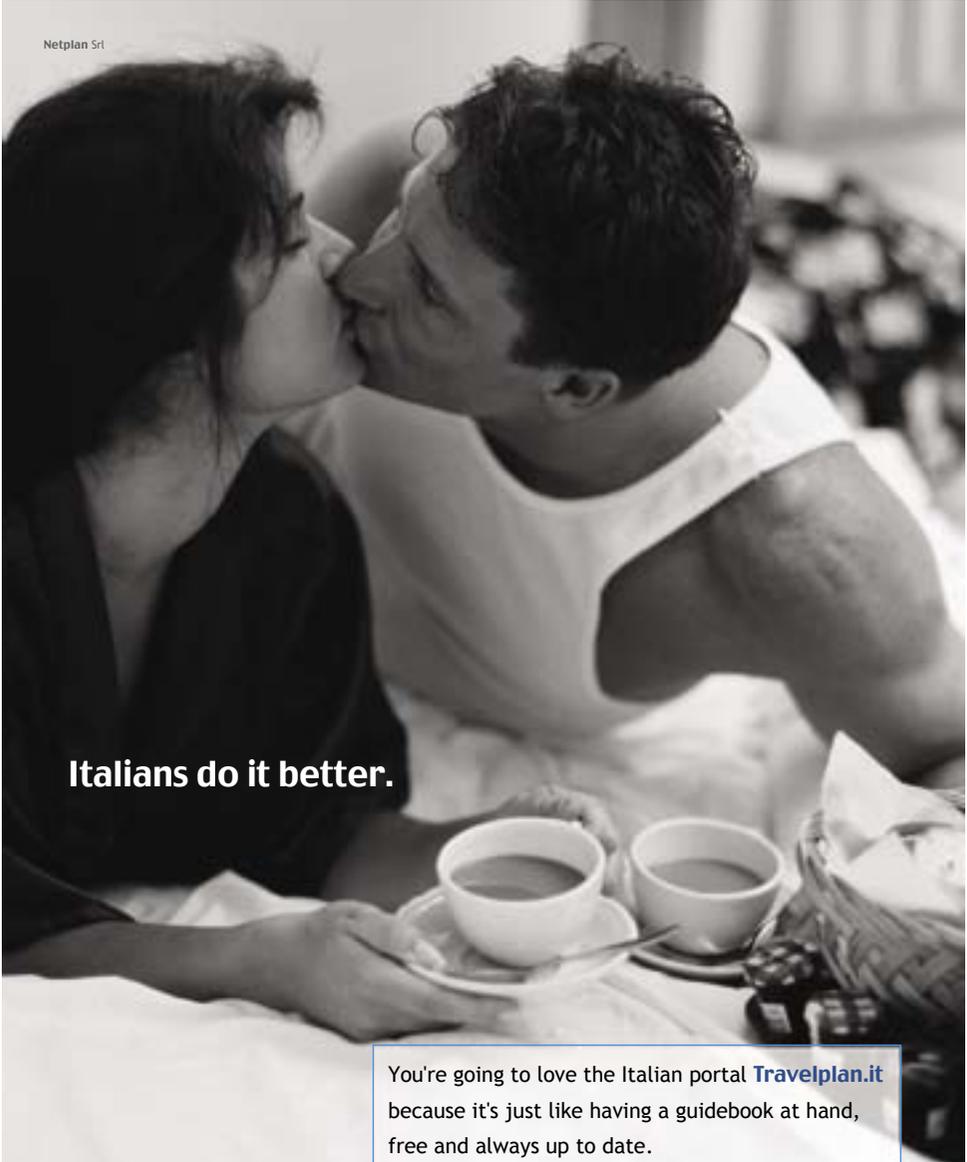
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