



Cinque Terre & Portovenere Kayaking Adventure

*Kayaking from Sestri Levante, along the villages of the Cinque Terre
to Portovenere & the Gulf of Poets!*



5-day kayaking Inn-to-Inn Kayaking Trip: from Sestri Levante to Portovenere



TRIP NOTES 2017

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Introduction

This short kayaking tour will bring you along some of Italy's most beautiful stretches of coastline: the famous 'Cinque Terre', or 'Five lands' as well as the so-called 'Gulf of Poets', already celebrated by Byron, Shelley and Keats. The starting point of the tour is another pearl of the Ligurian coast, the beautiful small town of Sestri Levante, with its stunning promontory.

From here we paddle in Eastern direction, towards the beautiful 'Cinque Terre'. This area gets its name from the five picturesque villages of Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola and Riomaggiore. The area, now a major National Park, is a unique part of Italy. For over a thousand years people have lived in this dramatic landscape, slowly altering its features and cultivating the steep hillsides that lead down to rocky shores. An extensive network of ancient mule tracks – today used as footpaths- can take you through an extraordinary landscape of terraces, built by hand with stones and earth. Paddling along the coast from Levanto to Riomaggiore, will make you admire the unique coastline perhaps even more. There is the chance to go ashore in many of the small towns, and wander around to enjoy their distinctive atmosphere.

The last stop of this great sea kayaking adventure is the nearby small town of Portovenere, a charming medieval town at the entrance of the 'Golfo dei Poeti', that is, the Poets' Gulf, in Liguria, Italy. Liguria is very famous for its gulfs but the Poets' Gulf is possibly the most closed and the most embracing of all, seeming in its smallness almost a lake – if not for a little break right where the two ends should meet. This incredible environment, contended by land and sea, is emblematic of the Romantic attitude, and was the inspirational background for two great English poets: Percy Bysbe Shelley and Lord Byron. Not without reason! Here we'll discover the stunning coast near Portovenere and make a full loop of the island of Palmaria, in, just off the coast in front of Portovenere.

You will discover that with reason this part of Italy has become a sought after place, since Victorian times, but as well that it takes only a little effort to get 'off the beaten track'. At only a few hundred metres away from the famous places, you will find yourself surrounded by nature. Its dramatic coastline offers wonderful views, different every step you take, and every metre you paddle.... It offers an extraordinary palette of colours, with deep azure skies, white limestone cliffs, deep blue seas, and bright citrus orchards lit by the dazzling Mediterranean sun. This intoxicating sensual feast inspires a celebration of the goodness of life itself.

Paddling in the waters of the Cinque Terre and Gulf of Poets, you will have the chance to admire the crystalline waters populated by a great fish variety. Kayaking, snorkelling, a relaxing stay at beautiful Portovenere; sea and mountain will help you to knock off from the daily stress and recover the contact with nature. On this tour we take you beyond the crowded beaches, and you'll be lying on isolated beaches and paddling alone with the seagulls.... In short, you'll discover the real Italian paradise!

A longer version of this tour includes also the Portofino Peninsula. For strong kayakers, with enough time available, we recommend the full tour, which gives you the opportunity to explore the amazing variety of the Liguria Coast, between the Cinque Terre, the Portofino Peninsula and the Gulf of Poets. We recommend this kayaking tour in combination with one of our [self-guided 'Cinque Terre & Portofino' walking tours](#), but of course we can as well provide route notes for 'just' one or two hikes.

We run this trip with a minimum of 4 persons. The standard starting accommodations are good 3 to 4-star hotels, but on request different hotels can be booked, from simple 3- to luxurious 5-star hotels (where available).

Please note: this is a moderately difficult trip which is suitable **only** for those who have experience with sea kayaking and a good general physical condition. Although the waters of the Mediterranean are usually calm, occasionally we can encounter a rougher sea.



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DAY-TO-DAY PROGRAMME

Day 0 - Genova/Pisa (or Sestri Levante)

Arrival in Sestri Levante in case you arrive a day earlier. The nearest international airports are Pisa and Genova, from where Sestri can easily be reached by train. Also from Milan, Rome (and many other cities) there are many (direct) trains. Several hotels can be booked in Sestri Levante (or any nearby town), ranging from 3 to 5-star, either 'downtown' centrally located, or near the harbour or train station dinner

Day 1 Arrival – Sestri Levante

Arrival in Sestri Levante. After settling in your hotel, at literally two steps from the beach, you can already go for a short stroll, or maybe there is some time for a dive into the Mediterranean.

Towards the end of the afternoon we meet our tour leader and the rest of the group. After a brief introduction of the tour we will outfit everyone with paddle and PFD and offer some basic kayaking instruction. Starting on the beach, the guide describes the paddling technique and the basis of kayak. Then we go for a short introduction trip, around the amazingly beautiful natural headland of Sestri Levante. We go ashore near the hotel again and with a short stroll we reach the perfect spot for our relaxed 'aperitivo'. In the evening we have a great meal in a nice restaurant close to our hotel.

Accommodation: Sestri Levante - Meals included: 1 'aperitivo', 1 dinner

Day 2 From Sestri Levante to the Cinque Terre

After breakfast we'll start paddling in eastern direction, towards the Cinque Terre National Park. As we glide through warm blue water the stunning coast unfolds before us. We paddle along the beach at Riva Trigoso (with its impressive shipyards) and then the coast becomes wild again. We continue along the nice seaside towns of Moneglia, Deiva Marina, with their large beaches and then Framura and Bonassola, under the towering cliffs. There are many possibilities to stop for our lunch, either a picnic lunch on the beach, or a nice slice of focaccia and a drink somewhere in a nice bar. Also are there many occasions to grab our daily gelato. Towards the end of the afternoon, we arrive at Levanto, surrounded by pine forests, olive groves and vineyards. Levanto is a lively little town with a large sandy beach and a charming medieval centre. Also out of season there is still some 'local life', with bars and restaurants open, as the town doesn't live from tourism only, making the town a lovely place for an overnight stay. At night we have a nice meal altogether in one of the typical local restaurants.

Accommodation: Levanto - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner

Day 3 Into the Heart of the Cinque Terre

After breakfast we'll load our kayaks and begin paddling the coast of Cinque Terre National Park. As we glide through warm blue water the panorama of Cinque Terre unfolds before us. Steep cliffs topped vineyards along which the towns are set a few kilometres apart. Our first stop is picturesque village of Monterosso. Then we continue to arguably the prettiest of the five villages, Vernazza. After landing on the beach in the town's small harbour we'll explore narrow alleyways and climb into the vineyards for a view that captures the iconic scenery of Cinque Terre. After lunch we'll re-board the kayaks for the paddle to Corniglia. As we skirt the shoreline Corniglia reveals itself like a castle set atop the cliffs overlooking the sea. We continue and glide past Manarola's waterfront. After that we'll paddle alongside the famous *Via dell'Amore* (the 'Walk of Love') - now closed to hikers, so only to be discovered from the sea! Towards the end of the afternoon we land at Riomaggiore. After landing and perhaps a refreshing swim a short climb up ancient stairs takes us into the village where we'll stay for the night. In the evening we are free to go out for dinner in one of the local restaurants or pizzerias.

Accommodation: Riomaggiore - Meals included: 1 breakfast



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Day 4 From the Cinque Terre to Portovenere in the 'Gulf of Poets' (with Palmaria)

We'll explore Riomaggiore (and buy some picnic supplies) before setting off along the last spectacular stretch of coast. This part of the coastline is almost completely without roads or villages, until Portovenere, at the very end of the peninsula, an enormously rewarding route! We first pass underneath the sanctuary of the Madonna di Montenero and then keep on paddling underneath the impressive cliffs, mostly forested, but alternated with terraces vineyards and a few colourful hamlets, suspended between the sky and the sea, and only linked to the rest of the world by a series of steep flights of stairs! We'll have a picnic on one of the small isolated beaches.

After lunch we continue towards Portovenere and enjoy more spectacular views. Arriving below the 16th Century castle above the village we may be able to catch a glimpse of the distant peaks of the Alpi Apuane, before passing at the 11th century church on St. Peter's Point. From here we can opt to paddle directly into the small harbour, the real heart of the village, or to make the paddling loop of the island of Palmaria. Our ultimate destination is our waterfront hotel. In any case we try to be ashore not too late to explore Portovenere, one of the most charming coastal towns in Italy (according to the New York Times one of "The 45 Places to Go"). This evening we'll watch the sunset while sampling local wine and dining on the terrace of our hotel. Later at night we can go for a last drink in the town square altogether, to say farewell to wonderful Liguria and raise our glasses to perhaps our best kayaking adventure ever.


Accommodation: Portovenere - Meals included: 1 breakfast, 1 dinner

Day 5 Departure

The tour ends in Portovenere after breakfast today (unless you booked an extension – extra days available upon request). You can easily make your own way by taxi or bus to La Spezia, to take a train from there, either back to the Cinque Terre or Portofino, or to Genova, Milan, Florence, Rome, Naples....



OUTLINE ITINERARY

Day	Itinerary & Activities		Distance	Notes
1	Arrival in Sestri Levante. Introduction trip	Sestri Levante	4 km.	<i>several options</i>
2	Paddling from Sestri Levante to Levanto.	Levanto	26 km.	
3	Paddling the Cinque Terre: Levanto to Riomaggiore	Riomaggiore	18 km.	
4	Riomaggiore - Portovenere (optional loop of Palmaria)	Portovenere	12 (18) km.	<i>Optional loop Palmaria</i>
5	Departure from Portovenere.	-	-	



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TOUR DETAILS

ACCOMMODATION & MEALS

All nights are spent in a beautiful characteristic 3 & 4-star hotels (generally our tours are 3/4-star level; we can book superior 4/5-star on request). All rooms have en-suite facilities.

Breakfast is included, in all accommodations. A number of evening meals is included, for which we have selected the best available restaurants.

No lunches are included in the tour price. On some days we can enjoy a picnic lunch on the beach, while on other days we'll have either a picnic lunch or a nice lunch in a restaurant on a nice beach.

INCLUSIONS

- Private English speaking tour leader for 5 days
- Professional guiding service for each activity
- Accommodation in beautiful ***/**** hotels
- Meals: 4 breakfasts, 3 dinners in fine restaurants
- Welcome drink
- All private & public transfers as indicated throughout the entire itinerary
- Rental of high-quality sea kayaks
- Group equipment and technical gear for each activity
- Special activities as outlined in the day by day itinerary
- 24/24 h local assistance
- Luggage transport
- All gratuities for baggage, porters & hotel service

Not Included

- Visas & Departure taxes
- Travel Insurance
- Drinks and meals not mentioned in the itinerary
- Optional additional tours or activities
- Tips
- Items of a personal nature



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LEVEL OF DIFFICULTY / REQUIRED SKILLS

Moderate (level 3)

This tour is suitable for kayakers with a minimum of sea kayaking experience. Our helpful guides/instructors will work with you to help you learn a new sport or become more comfortable with the outdoors. The waters of the Mediterranean are usually calm, and you'll encounter only short open water crossings.

Fitness: A good standard of fitness is necessary. You should be able to paddle for up to 4 hours.

ARRIVAL & DEPARTURE

Arrival:

The tour starts in SESTRI LEVANTE, a town with a train station, very well connected with Genova, la Spezia/Pisa and all other major Italian cities by a frequent (high speed) train service.

The nearest city with an international airport is GENOVA.

A pick-up service from the train station (or other places) can be arranged on request.

Departure:

The tour ends after breakfast on day 5 in PORTOVENERE. The onward journey is most easily made by train (from La Spezia – which can easily be reached by taxi or local bus).

A taxi transfer to the La Spezia (train station), Pisa or Genova can be arranged on request.

TOUR VARIATIONS

It is possible to include some extra nights before or after your tour, in any of the accommodations 'en route'. For those who love hiking too, a few extra days in the Cinque Terre are strongly recommended.

At the beginning or the end of the tour there is also the opportunity to visit Genova (a unique city) and/or Pisa, Lucca and Florence. The tour can easily be extended with a few days here. Also an extra night in Portovenere is strongly recommended. Details & prices on request.

UPGRADE

On our 'standard tours' we provide accommodation in very good, mostly 4-star hotels, with the best possible price/quality ration. On some dates however it is possible to book a slightly cheaper version of this tour, staying in more luxurious 4- or 5-star hotels. Please ask us for details.

LONGER VERSIONS

A longer version of this tour is also available, covering also the Portofino Peninsula.

See also our other Kayaking tours !

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