

Beautiful Liguria!

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Known for its natural beauty, including long stretch of beaches, impressive cliffs plunging into the sea, and magnificent national parks, Liguria is one of the most popular destinations for vacationers, and its sea-driven cuisine attracts chefs and foodies from around the world. This stretch of stunning coastline is the Italian Riviera, and it includes spots such as the Genoa, Sanremo, Portofino, and the Cinque Terre. Each offers visitors a unique Ligurian experience. The Mediterranean Sea courses through Italian veins, and regardless of where they are around the world, the hearts of the people long for their beloved mare. There are few Italian regions, however, as tied to the sparkling waters of the Mediterranean as northwestern Liguria, a region of coastline which runs along the northwestern shores of il bel paese.



GENOVA

A powerful maritime city for the first half of the second millennium, Genova today is divided into two parts: the Old City, seeped in Genova's powerful trade and fishing history, and the New City, with its modern buildings and industry. Most tourists gravitate towards the [historic city center](#) [2], featuring the old port, or Porto Antico, and enjoy the lively zone of restaurants, shops, and caruggi, or small, narrow alleyways. Lined along the Strade Nuove, or new streets, in the historic center are the Palaces of Genova, named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2006 for their Renaissance and Baroque style and for collectively being the first example of European urban planning. Of interest to pilgrims visiting the city is often the Church of San Lorenzo, which houses the ashes of Saint John the Baptist, and music lovers can enjoy a number of opera, ballets, and concerts at the [Teatro San Carlo Felice](#). [3]

While Liguria is known for its contributions to the Italian cuisine of pesto and small chickpea tarts called farinata, the fresh and versatile seafood dishes in this port town is what wins our hearts. We love the [Antica Osteria di Vico Palla](#) [4], not far from Porto Antico.

SANREMO

Tucked away in the western corner of the Imperia province of Liguria lies the destination hotspot Sanremo. The city is best known for its tourism, offering a wide range of hotels, shopping, and dining options (such as the Michelin-starred Paolo e Barbara) to go with its beautiful beaches. Other notable tourist attractions include Villa Nobel, the villa in which Alfred Nobel passed in 1896, and the Sanremo Music Festival, a popular Italian song contest.

PORTOFINO

Originally a fishing village in southern Liguria, Portofino could be considered Liguria's answer to Sardinia's Emerald Coast. The city itself began turning heads in the 1950's, when "Love in Portofino" was released worldwide and the city became a popular spot for actors, artists, and celebrity personalities to vacation. Today, the trend continues, and the town is full of luxury hotels, such as the Belmond Hotel Splendido, shops, and restaurants. Our favorite shopping spots include the Calzoleria Mingo for artisan shoes and the Spinnaker boutique, which also has a shop in Sanremo. Foodies can enjoy a private wine tasting or dine at one of the many restaurant options, such as Puny, where Richard Burton proposed to Elizabeth Taylor, or a more relaxed lunch spot, such as Trattoria Concordia. The town is also well known for its superb sailing and yachting options, allowing visitors to discover much more of the breathtaking coastline.

CINQUE TERRE

Last but certainly not least on many American travelers' bucket lists is the Cinque Terre. A string of five towns on the Ligurian coast about an hour and a half from Florence, this destination has exploded in the last decades. Although beautiful, the towns are small and do not offer much in terms of lodging for tourists, and we suggest that travelers look at La Spezia, Santa Margherita Ligure, or Portofino for overnight options. From any of these towns or Florence, one can take a day excursion to the cities, hiking the 10 kilometers between the towns or taking a boat or train to move between towns. Unique experiences such as a sunset boat tour will separate you from the hordes of tourists and allow you to truly appreciate the unique beauty of these small towns built into cliffs.

by Martina Zuccarello of [Select Italy](#). [5] an agency specializing in Italian travel.

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