



CINQUE TERRE | ITALY

*Curated by Natasha*

# WHY I ABSOLUTELY

love

## CINQUE TERRE



When it comes to Cinque Terre, I am aware of how spoiled I am to have been able to visit, not once, as most people will in their lives, but close to 10 times. I have lost count and my really bad memory is not helping me at all to recall the numbers & times. However, I know that each time I have done it has been under very different circumstances and with a range of different people.

I am currently (Dec 2022) living an hour's drive away and now, the times, when I need to escape to nature alone, I go there. I feel safe, I feel connected and I feel so deeply inspired by my surroundings. I always come across really interesting people, have a little chat and move on. It's a spiritually charged space.

Cinque Terre, for those of you who don't know, means 5 lands (5T). And there are a number of different ways to navigate the 5 different villages - Riomaggiore, Camogli, Vernazza, Manarola & Monterossa - you can use the very efficient train system that connects all 5 towns and explore it by train, stopping at each town for a snack and some shopping and the beautiful views. You can do it by boat or paddling and see the gorgeous landscape from the ocean, looking at the land, or my favorite way, you can do it by foot.

The hiking between each town is varied and most parts will get your heart rate up, climbing up and down a number of steps or hillsides. The views are exceptional as you snake your way along the terraced vineyards, overlooking the top of the steeples and into the villages from above. Each village has its own character and so does each path that connects them. I know my favorite coffee shop, and the best view for wine along the path, I have found the most exceptional window to sit at and have a very refreshing orange/lemon ice crush while being treated to a gorgeous panoramic view and I have found my favorite little hidden spot to take a picnic and overlook the olive groves.

Cinque Terre is an absolute **MUST-DO** for anyone visiting Italy, there is so much heart and so much character - you can eat, drink, hike and chat all day.

It truly is one of my favorite places in the world.

And I hope my guide helps you to fall in love with it too.

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# A FEW THINGS TO KNOW (IN MY HUMBLE OPINION)



## How to get there?

My suggestion, especially in Summer or just outside of summer season, would be to go by train. You would either catch the train to Riomaggiore or Monterosso. The final destination would depend on which direction you want to walk. There are amazing accomodation options throughout the whole route and the trains make everything so easily accessible. I would not recommend driving in the summer, the parking is a nightmare. Park rather in La Spezia and catch the train from there.



## How does the currency fare to Rands?

The local currency is Euro. And while it can be really pricey to do the very touristy things, I have found that grabbing food and wine from a market and sitting somewhere beautiful is an equally wonderful way to spend time there. Flat white around 2-3 Euro (ZAR 33-50).



## When is the best time of year to go?

The summer months are typically May-Sept. However, I love the off-season times - April and October. The prices are lower, it's not as hot and there are not as many people. The summer is absolutely packed and in my opinion, not that pleasant. The trains are rammed and the path to hike has a lot of stop/starts. I would personally opt to do the route off season (April/May, Oct).



## Any extras you should pack?

As I said , I like to hike the route, so I would pack stuff for hiking - backpack, water holder, snacks, light rain coat, sun cream, hat, swimming costume and lightweight towel. Even if you don't hike, pack extremely light, not a lot of the accommodation is ground-floor, most you have to walk up a LOT of stairs and hills. Be warned.



## The food you must try?

There are so many wonderful delis and bars along the way. I really love to have a couple of really small meals a long the way and try it all! Sometimes I by bits and pieces from the village and have a picnic up in the terraced Olive groves. The gelato is a must do, the fresh OJ along the way is so refreshing and of course the Aperol Spritz is so good after a hot climb up and down, in and out of the villages.

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## WHERE I STAYED....



### BEAUTIFUL AIRBNB

In 2017 my mum and I stayed at [Serena's Place](#) on Airbnb and it was great. The space was light and central to Riomaggiore. It was very close to good coffee shops, and restaurants, but also, what we loved is it had its own kitchen so we could make up lovely lunches for our picnics on the hike.

And this year, 2022, my brother and I stayed in a really lovely apartment, also in Riomaggiore. It was equally central and well set up. The company have a few apartments around the area, we stayed in this [one](#).



### MY FAVORITE IN RIOMAGGIORE

In 2019, I went with my boyfriend at the time and we stayed in this exceptionally beautiful apartment that boasted uninterrupted views of the ocean, as well as views of the exceptionally beautiful Riomaggiore coated in sunset light. It had a small balcony and very comfortable bed. If you are able to treat yourself, this little spot is worth the extra few euros!



### THE BIRD'S EYE VIEW

In 2020, I did the upper route of Cinque Terre with my friend, Sarah, we stayed in the less-known areas and did more secluded hiking trails. This brought us to a very sweet hamlet, called San Bernadino, where we stayed for the night. This gorgeous apartment was 2 floors and had unbelievable bird eye views of the whole expanse of Cinque Terre from above. I do recommend that if you are lucky enough to do Cinque Terre more than once in your life, doing the paths less traveled, is well worth it! (I will link this one soon!)

## WHERE I ATE....

So, I will be the first to put my hand up here, I bring a lot of my own food when doing this route, however, over the years I have stopped at a few really wonderful spots, here they are....



### CAFES/BREAKFAST

In Riomaggiore, I really like Il Maggiore for my morning coffee... they make a really good coffee! When we were in San Bernadino, we found the most gorgeous spot called, Cade Ventu, where we had coffee, BUT, it also looks like the most amazing accommodation! As you know, I don't love Italian breakfasts, but both spots serve the good old croissant and focaccia option :)



### BARS/VIEWPOINTS

Most of the rest of my recommendations include where to get an incredible drink (alcoholic or not) with an exceptional view. I would like to think of this as a skill that I could include in my CV. I have spent most of my time in Riomaggiore, Vernazza, and Corniglia and so I do not have any suggestions for Monterosso and Manarola, but hopefully, with another year so close by, I will improve on this!

#### RIOMAGGIORE:

My first recommendation would be to buy some prosecco, crackers, chees, olives and pesto and head down to the main bay of Riomaggiore in a swimsuit and join the rest of the crowds as you watch the sunset over the beautiful colored houses.

However, if you are stuck on getting your cocktail made for you with a similar view, there is a stunning bar, called "La Conchiglia" with amazing views and good cocktails. Get there early to get a seat!

I have also eaten at and highly recommend Lo Scalo, Dau Cila, and my fave, Trattoria La Grotta.

#### MANAROLA:

As you come into Manarola and before you head down into the town, there is Trattoria de Billy, with beautiful views and a lovely terrace. Call ahead.

The walk between Manarola and Corniglia feels a little longer, but it is s beautiful and possibly my favorite section as you wind through the terraced vineyards and olive groves. You also pass closely through gardens and a gorgeous church. In a clearing, overlooking a beautiful vista of the ocean, there is my favorite little wine bar, "Cantina Capellini" - have an aperitvo here.

#### CORNIGLIA TO VERNAZZA

La Torre, a lovely terraced restaurant!

The heart of Cinque Terre looks like a beautiful place to stay, wine and dine! And to be honest, there is is road access to get closer to the accommodation for an amazing view. I would definitely stay here.

And for me the most heart stopping OJ you will ever have - at Bar Il Gabbiano - we had the mix of orange and lemon ice crush. Was so refreshing on a rather unexpectedly hot October day.



## BARS/VIEWPOINTS CONTINUED...

My experience has been that every time I open the discussion people try to find out which of the 5 towns is their favorite. This year, I was walking on my own, I had switched off my phone, disconnected, and was only with my thoughts. And a part of me was curious to see if I could answer the question. I love Riomaggiore and I know it really well. However, Corniglia and Vernazza come in very close as my favorites. Ha ha, if we even have to pick one!

Corniglia is stunning and tightly packed, you wander the tight corridor of the center up to the top and there you find this stunning bar, Bar Terza Terra di Cadario Alison, perched on a lookout. I really love to have an Aperol Spritz there. I seem to always hold out for it. The spot to feel the sun on your skin and take a moment to soak it all in. it's truly gorgeous.

Another really cute terrace in Corniglia, Food and Sea Trattoria. lovely cheese boards and a nice ambient terrace to enjoy your lunch. No direct sea view though.

I really love Vernazza and entering it from either side, is so beautiful. It is the place where I normally find myself when I am hungry. There are some really great little takeaway shops if you want something quick. but if you have made a time/money allowance for a nice lunch, I would highly recommend the scenic and very tasty food at Ristorante Belforte. I also really like popping around the corner to see Castello Doria.

There are so many more things I could share, but I do think the beauty of Cinque Terre is stumbling across the things you like, so while my ideas above are lovely, be careful not to open your eyes and find your own hotspots that maybe I have missed. My favorite moments of the 5T have been those moments when I chatted endlessly with other travelers, sat with my picnic in an obscure space, and soaked up the insanely beautiful views!!!

Here is a link to my [google maps list](#) of all the areas mentioned above.

ENJOY IT!!!!