



## Cinque Terre Hike with Portofino and Florence Trip Notes October 2-17, 2013

### **Why? Why Not!**

We did so well with Country Walkers on the Amalfi Coast trip that it seemed a no-brainer to go with them again to this hot spot on the Italian Riviera. We would stay a few days in Portofino (which turned out to be our favorite destination following Ravello on Amalfi) then I would join the 7-day hike while Tom did his own thing, then we'd meet up in Florence for a few days. As it turned out Tom canceled Bologna first in order to spend more time in these little seaside villages, and then after getting there and seeing Portofino (not to mention the crazy traffic) he gave up Parma too.

### **Portofino was our first stop and maybe our favorite village**

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Portofino> and <http://wikitravel.org/en/Portofino> for more info. This is a picture taken with my iPhone and from our hike high up on the adjoining hillside.

*Portofino became famous in the 1950s with the song "Love in Portofino." Legendary actor Sir Rex Harrison owned a villa in Portofino which he named San Genesio after the Roman Catholic patron saint of actors. Portofino has inspired a recreation of the sea side town around the harbor at Tokyo DisneySea in Japan and a full scale replication in authentic detail at the Portofino Bay at Universal Orlando Resort in Orlando. Portofino also featured in Top Gear where Richard Hammond, in a Ferrari Daytona raced James May in a carbon fiber powerboat from Portofino to St Tropez. Andrea Bocelli also recorded a concert here, released on DVD. Portofino is the eponym of Frank Schaeffer's Portofino: A Novel (1992). It was the first of Schaeffer's Calvin Becker Trilogy. Portofino is one of the shooting locations of the 1995 Antonioni / Wenders film, Beyond the Clouds.*



I couldn't stop taking pictures and videos and kept announcing that I was in a state of nirvana. From one of my email videos: "Everybody is beautiful, everything is wonderful, and what a wonder that I can be here and with Tom to boot." Yet don't think everything is perfect as evidenced by paying 42 euros for 2 Aperol spritz. Honest! It was water side with food tidbits at least where we could watching the tourists get into a water taxi for about 300 euro for a short trip and that after buying the requisite Portofino shirts which were everywhere.

Tom will serve up his usual Photo Show at [www.TomsKoi.com](http://www.TomsKoi.com) in due course but I can't resist a couple of my own. I see that he's posting separate shows and the first one is just on Portofino.





Taken from high up on one of the hills, and then in the hilltop cemetery full of famous poets and dignitaries along with their sculptures. The yacht was parked in Portofino the entire stay and likely due to the Genoa Yacht Show but also because the famous woman owner spends her life entertaining and living aboard the yacht named “Strangelove.”

### ***Our digs for three nights***

Tom had surprisingly agreed to a very small apartment, mainly because it was right at the shoreline and in the middle of town on Via Roma. I loved the sweet restaurant on the bottom floor where we ate twice and were treated so well by the family.

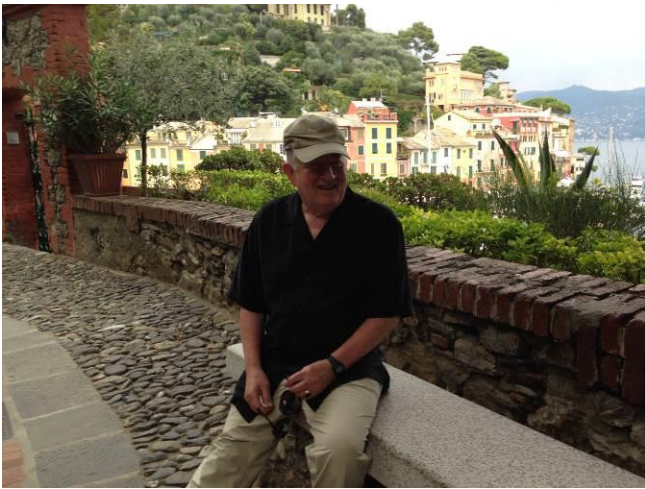
From website: *Accommodations: 1 bedroom, 1 full bathroom plus 1/2, sleeps 4. Located in the center of famous fisherman's village of Portofino, from always considered one of the most elegant and charming destinations in Italy. A wonderful little apartment furnished with all that you need. It's about 150 square meters, with one bedroom, a living room with kitchen and a big bathroom. All comforts are included: LCD 32-inch television and 17-inch in the bedroom, DVD, stereo etc. The beach is only 200m away, the famous 'Piazzetta' is just at 20m and so are all the tiny restaurants, bars, boutique and shops of the town.*



That's a Gucci store out our window but of course this little town attracts all the name brands. No, that's not where I shopped and in fact I probably didn't come home with a single thing except a couple extra body fat pounds.

### ***Hiking 101***

We walked a lot, especially Tom. We went way up and around the hill to tour a 1400s castle that had most recently been renovated by the Champagne fellow named Mumm. He had collected many historical pictures from early 1900s. Even Tom thought the hike up was worth it. Another day we walked to another seaside town called Parragi all along the water but up in the oak trees and overlooking farm houses, streams and mossy walkways. It was on the way to our next towns stay and might be the first hike of the tour. As usual we found a seaside bar for a rest before walking back under a cloudy sky. We later learned that one of the many villas we passed was one of Berlusconi's many villas. He would be sentenced to prison while we were there and as we left he was petitioning for house arrest. No kidding!



### Eating 202



The quintessential red checkered tablecloth restaurant run by the family and it was downstairs. That's our room up on top! That's my favorite fish called Dorado. Our entire dinners probably didn't cost as much as our Aperol spritz. It was here that Tom looked over at another table, asked if they spoke English, and then asked what they were eating. It was a vegetable tort which we learned is a local favorite. The fellow proceeded to offer Tom a taste and of course Tom obliged. Friendly Italians know no bounds! I would later do just the same for a young Canadian couple who 'needed' to try our black ink squid risotto.

Tom would later join the hiking group for the first two dinners plus the last dinner. It worked out well for me to have his company and for him to have Angelica's food knowledge as well as her well known restaurant friends obliging us with their specialties. Get this: he got tired of eating too!

### Signs! Amusing to Revealing



Sometimes the translations are the entertainment as is "Naked Lights Strictly Prohibited" and sometimes it's the sign of warning as were the huge number of bolt locks on our apartment door. Sometimes it's a wonderment as to why as in "Area Bar" stationed at the bar area, and as often as

not if you see diamond skeletons being sold as earrings, you know you're in a ritzy tourist area full of tourists with far too much money. I saw something like this in Las Vegas. It fits.

### ***Church bells declare its 48 o'clock!***

Did you think the maximum church bell bong was 12 for 12 o'clock? Wrong. Tom counted and named it 48 o'clock one morning probably because there were four churches all on a different time setting and obviously not synchronized. Fortunately I don't hear well.

### ***Email to friends from Portofino:***

I like Tom's subject heading: "We've arrived." Every time we take a trip, I feel like I've arrived at the pinnacle of life. This little village of Portofino is the stuff of movies.

The apartment is not only near to our parking garage (still smiling at Tom's message sent while under the influence of major jet lag) but it's also near to the Mediterranean. In fact within sight. I was also surprised when he chose such a small and simple apartment, but after all, its location-location-location in real estate, is it not? As it turns out, the place is not only adequate but some really classy additions. What looked like linoleum flooring in the pictures is in fact lovely ceramic tile. The cabinetry is designer quality. The little back terrace is a jewel. But then there are some oddities too and taking a shower would not be possible for a fatty and it's full of challenges and giggles for the rest of us.

### ***Four o'clock syndrome***

We challenge jet lag by refusing to let it take hold the first day, but in the middle of the night it hit full force and didn't allow for sleep, then in the morning when the weather was near perfect we couldn't rally. So much for ignoring jet lag. (I am always nagged by the 4 o'clock syndrome even when I get home. In the morning I wake at 4am. In the afternoon I'm tired at 4pm.)



### ***No Camera!***

Yes, Tom forgot his trusty camera and now he's relegated to my wee simple point-and-shoot camera while I will take over the iPhone and hope fellow hikers on the Cinque Terre will share some pictures with me. He likes to challenge himself and this packing day was no exception with his only starting a shower then packing at 1pm when the car to the airport was due at 3pm. The camera is not the only forgotten item. I say he likes to shop in foreign countries and the last trip I seem to recall the marathon shopping spree hunting for socks (when we learned they were only available in a sock shop) and a jacket. If he forgot either of those this time, he hasn't admitted it and I'm sure he wouldn't want to shop in Portofino as its full of Gucci (across the street from our apartment), Louis Vuitton and Dior type shops.

We are through the first of three nights in tiny Portofino. Tiny in all respects but lovely and what would have only been a dream as a child. And here we are, living the dream and sure that we've arrived.

## ***The hiking group through Country Walkers – not exactly Hiking 303***



Some were novice hikers but that was handled well by our guide Angelica and those novices learned fast and I suspect will be pros themselves soon. Angelica kindly gave Michael and me her free and optional afternoon to take us on a tougher hike. Maybe in the long run I was lucky and was saved from myself by not getting a more strenuous hiking week as I'd signed up for.

### ***Lock up your heart!***

Do you know of this fad of locks on bridges? Lovers add their padlock and throw the key into the river or ravine? We first saw it in Paris where it became a major problem for the weight of the bridge plus the pile of metal keys in the river. It must have been good news for the lock makers however. Maybe even the locksmiths. The fad is all over the Italian coast and into Florence and fines are threatened all to no avail. Usually it's just a lock but some lovers got creative with blue and pink ribbons all tied up with their names too. So much for worrying about a fine.



### ***Gelato – even in Saffron!***

They have a recipe that is secret and only in Italy? The fact that Americans go gaga over Italian gelato is very amusing to me. The world isn't flat? They don't have the same recipe in America? Guess it's the ambiance but it seems to be an ambiance enjoyed more by those who have enjoyed a really whole lot of gelato. In one of the little villages we succumbed to this fad and tried their saffron gelato. Never having been a fan of ice creams anyway, I had to say it wasn't worth the calories. Their Pocket Coffees suited me better. (Those are little chocolates with a dose of caffeine.)

***Cinque Terre from New York Times*** travel section which coincidentally was published the Sunday after we left and why should I tell the story when NY Times did it so well?

This is Monterosso, the northernmost village in Cinque Terre, is known for its sandy beaches.



Monterosso's main plaza, or Piazza Garibaldi, has a playground for children. It sits between the beaches and the main street of Via Roma, lined with shops and restaurants.

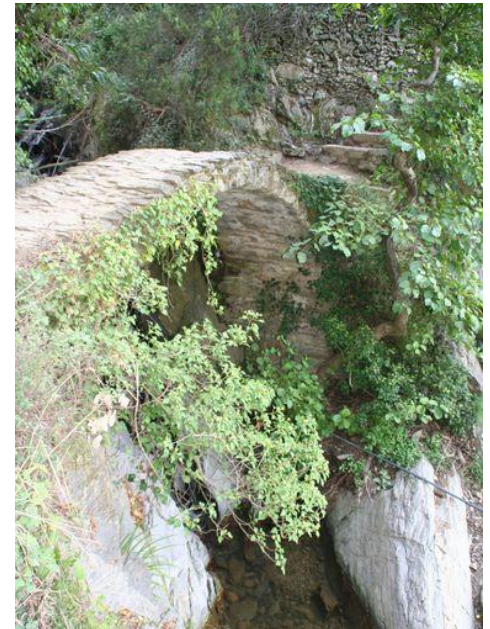


Rocks in Monterosso's harbor catch the waves and leave a calm area for swimming along the beaches.



Trails and railroad lines link the five villages of Cinque Terre, although in places the hikes can be steep. These are steps leading away from Monterosso.

A stone bridge along the path between Monterosso and Vernazza.



Vernazza is perhaps the prettiest of the five villages of Cinque Terre, with its ringed harbor protecting the pastel buildings.

Boats line the main street of Via Visconti in Vernazza.



Riomaggiore is the southernmost town in Cinque Terre, with a lover's lane called Via dell'Amore leading to Manarola.



The buildings of Riomaggiore climb the hillside away from the sea, giving layered views of the water.

Corniglia is the middle of the five villages of Cinque Terre, perched above the Ligurian Sea.



Corniglia is one of the quieter towns in Cinque Terre because it is a little tougher to reach - up 382 steps from the train station, or from steep hillside trails.

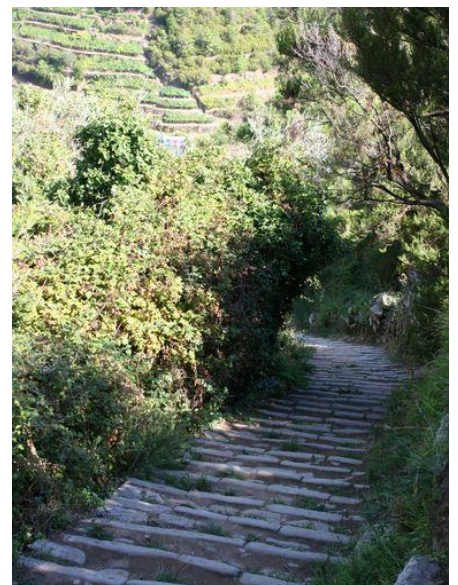


Vineyards are etched into the hillsides above Corniglia.

The trail leading down to Manarola is steep enough for stone steps.



Manarola is located on a rocky outcropping within a narrow ravine where buildings are crowded together.



*Manarola, Italy -- A yellow bell tower that warned of pirates in past centuries stands sentinel in Italy's seaside village of Manarola. A bit farther down the hill in a town is a house with a water-wheel, which gives the town its name in the local dialect. The sunny walk across the hillside above town is spread with olive groves and vineyards of glistening green grapes. But the refreshment comes where the main street of Via Renato Birilli spills into the town's rocky harbor, offering deep-water swimming in the clear blue water.*

*Manarola is one of five villages known as Cinque Terre along Italy's northwest coast. While the region's name means "five lands," it may as well translate as "many steps." Each village has a permanent population measured in hundreds rather than thousands. Each has places to stay, shops to browse and restaurants to enjoy abundant local seafood.*

*After dwelling in isolation until a century ago, the towns are now linked by hiking trails and a railroad line. A visit offers the opportunity to sample the sandy beach in one town, a ceramic shop in another and the seafood risotto in another – all in one day.*

*Restaurants tend to display the day's catch from the shimmering Ligurian Sea next to the door with the menus. At the family-run Via Venti, on a side street in Monterosso, giant shrimp sprawl on a bed of ice awaiting the grill. Around the corner, at Al Pozzo, the sea bass are propped up on the ice as if leaping for their own dinner.*

*The towns, a three- or four-hour train ride from Milan, each have their own character. The northernmost village of Monterosso has the sandy beach. Next is picturesque Vernazza, with round harbor guarding pastel buildings. Corniglia is perched highest above the water. Manarola has deep-water swimming. And the anchor of Riomaggiore feels less touristy than the rest.*

*Flooding inundated the villages in October 2011, hitting the northern towns worst. A house that was torn apart still sits with its gaping living room facing the path between Monterosso and Vernazza. Mud filled Laura's bakery along Via Emanuele in Monterosso, as seen in pictures from that time. But the town is back on its feet and her shop with new appliances is back to serving cappuccino and cream-filled donuts at sidewalk tables. Alas, the two easiest paths along the water – connecting three southernmost towns – are closed this year for maintenance. But padlocks continue to accumulate at the gates of Via dell'Amore, the lover's lane between Riomaggiore and Manarola, where couples seal their commitment with locks.*

*For a less strenuous visit, regional trains run frequently between the towns. A two-day pass for the trains and for hiking along the trails, which are technically part of a national park, costs about \$30. Just remember that riding the train to Corniglia leaves 382 steps in 33 zig-zagging flights up the hill from the railway station to the town. A shuttle bus timed to meet the trains will cart pass holders up the hill for free.*

*For hearty travelers, the steepest trails remain open. One rewarding hike, from Monterosso to Vernazza, heads up and down trails steep enough for steps to be carved into the hills. A picnic table at the summit offers a place to sip water and drink in the spectacular view. Along the trails, the region's international appeal is evident from Asian hikers snapping pictures, Australians wearing floppy hats and Germans pressing along with alpine walking sticks. English serves as a common language to share tips about slippery rocks or tasty blackberries ahead.*

*Another strenuous hike is called the vineyard path from Corniglia to Manarola. Despite the head start of the shuttle bus, the climb out of Corniglia is exhausting and the descent into Manarola leaves rubbery legs. But the views may be worth the struggle, seeing the next village perched above the waves. Vineyards are tiered along the hillsides. Olives and berries also grow along the path, which seems to meander through the backyards of residents at times. After a sweaty walk, the reward in Manarola comes beyond the ceramic shops and sidewalk restaurants and gelato stands, with a cool dip in the blue sea.*

### **My pictures from iPhone**

Remember – Tom had my usual camera. He must have felt in withdrawal without his and miffed at how simple was mine. But he was a good sport and unlike when his malfunctioned while in Luzerne, he didn't rush out to purchase a better model.





We knew we'd be eating well. Fresh food. Interesting food. Beautiful food. Not only because that's a mainstay of Country Walkers' trips but also because our guide Angelica is a foodie.



At the monastery of ancient times, which one can only get to by foot or by boat, we had pesto 'lasagna' which showed me that our lasagna is nothing like their lasagna. Everyone but me liked it a lot; I found it to be just green stuff on a thin slab of flour and water pastry. It was good that I still had one of my few peanut-butter-and-jelly sandwiches that day. The monastery was good no matter with their museum and old family run restaurant but also the story of the statue that's in the waters of these UNESCO protected waterways.

Some views have to be earned either by getting their on foot or by helicopter. This was one of those views that took a lot of earning with either very steep trails or zillions of steps, some even, some not. Just getting out of the monastery was a challenging hike but unfortunately only one of two or three of the week.





Another earned view. This sign reminds us that wild boars are in abundance and while we saw results of their digging and thought we heard them, we never saw a live one. The next sign suggests a “naturalist beach” but we were disappointed to figure out that it might translate to “environmental” instead of something more interesting.



Walk through a tunnel and you never know what you’ll find, only that it’ll be gorgeous, interesting, and probably followed up by a lot of food and generally food taken in the outdoors.



One afternoon lunch gave us what we might all remember as our favorite: a simple fish and pecorino cheese salad followed by a plate of anchovies which were to be put onto buttered bread. During the week we ate so much crawfish, shrimp, langoustines, etc., that we all got tired of it. Beautiful no matter.



The most interesting was black ink (squid) pasta and risotto. We were all hesitant but then declared we liked it and when this young Canadian couple came by to ask if we were enjoying the (outdoor) restaurant, we offered them a bite too. Remember we'd been offered a taste at our little local restaurant in Portofino so we played it forward. Here is the chef with a big fish head on his chefs table.



Their dessert wine is made from letting the grapes dry to raisins. We were all taken by it but consumed plenty of other stuff too – and lots of it!



Before and After – billboards display the horrid floods these villages suffered in 2011. Most is cleaned up.



***Our private afternoon hike***

Remember how this was to be a moderate to strenuous hike but we had some novices show up? Angelica offered to take Michael and me on a hike up to the top of the mountains and down into another village. It was only moderately tough but I enjoyed the exercise and very much the views.

My big ego trip: When Michael said he'd really pressed hard to get up those hills, huffing and puffing, and every time he looked back, there I was. He said "You're one tough ole broad." I loved it!



We traversed some rough stone steps requiring hand holds and our views just kept getting farther and farther away from Corniglia. The drop offs were pretty steep and some of the narrow pathways had small landslides but still there was plenty to keep one's footing. We got ourselves into vineyards.



We found a church where you wouldn't expect there to even be a village, then into Manorolo with its water wheel and finally the ferry landing which was really just a bunch of rocks with a very narrow aisle necessitating riders to wait up on the rockeries.

Coming into the ferry landing was the same situation of it being on the rocks, and by then it was late and lovely skies.



The last picture here is the ferry landing where we all waited upon the rockeries – the next day the rockeries were flooded too much for the ferries to land.

***One of the most memorable and extravagant meals***

From Portovenere we took a small lovely wooden (Venice) type boat out to an island – despite it raining heavy and 25 to 30mph winds. All for a meal. Tom had said “no thanks” until Angelica convinced him he must go. You’ll see why.



On the way back in the boat the seas almost got all of it back and I wasn't the only one.

**Some things are universal**



A thong as a beer opener! Cute. Toilet signs anyone can read. We lived with plenty of squatty potties. Tourist merchandise like this risqué apron. Luigi the waiter, maître d, reception clerk and man about town that we loved and who didn't mind putting a flower pot on his head and an apron on his body to make us all laugh.

**And then there are cats.** Who doesn't love a cat? Especially Tom's ying/yang cat.



**The last hiking and touring day - in Portovenere**





***Followed by The Last Supper*** – where we didn't want to eat, and Tom didn't, and where we learned that there were still some favorites. Mine was the shrimp and white truffle pasta.



***And then there was Florence and vicinity***

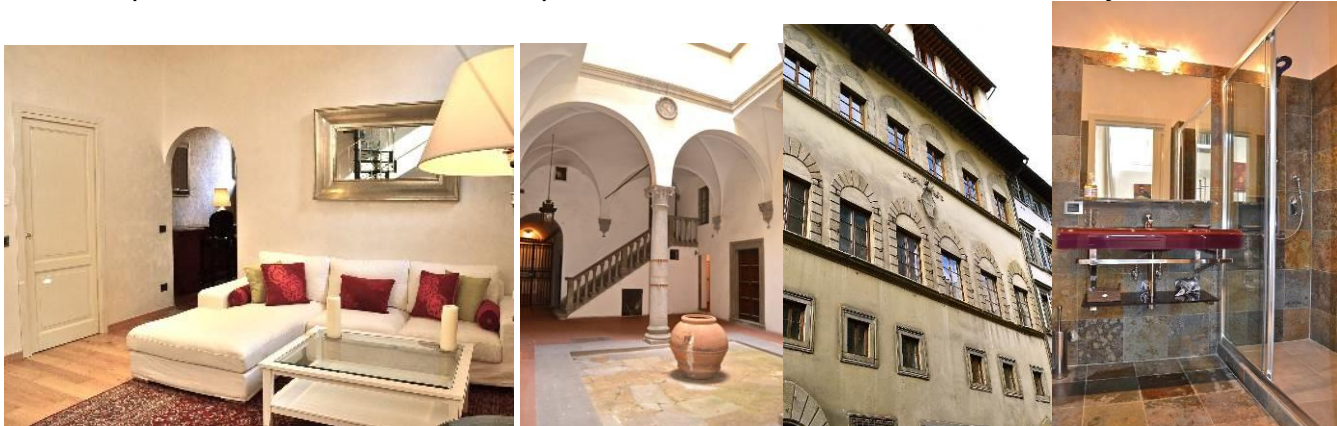
We so enjoyed our tour guide Angelica that we hired her for two days in and outside of Florence. The rental car and the drivers were a challenge but Angelica saved the day and offered to drive. She also had not driven a hybrid and this Citroen DS was tough for her and Tom both.

***Apartments are important to us – why live less than at home?***

From [www.vrbo.com](http://www.vrbo.com): The apartment is located in one of the historical sites of Florence: via Maggio, next to the Pitti Palace and the famous Boboli Garden and it's just a few minute walk from Ponte Vecchio. The street itself has always been the street of the antique shops in Florence, however, since it's only a short walk from the historical square of Santo Spirito, the area is surrounded by typical local restaurants and by many other shops for each type of need.

*The Palace, though very old, in fact it belonged to the Corsini family until the XIXth century and then to the Rosselli del Turco family it is still under the protection of the Fine Arts, but has a modern elevator and the apartment maintains the beauty of a conservative restoration and provides all the amenities and comforts. In the apartment there is a spacious living room of 40sqm, a separate dining room with a dining table for 6 persons and a fully equipped kitchen.*

*The master bedroom has a king size bed and it is very spacious and comfortable. The second bedroom has a baldachin king size bed and both the bedrooms has original drawings on the walls. In the loft there is a double bed and an en suite bathroom. Both the bathrooms have closed showers and they are fully equipped. In the apartment there is AC in all the rooms, WIFI internet access and it is 1292 square feet. The renovation has been completed in October 2012 so the apartment is brand new and accurate in every detail.*



With picture of apartment and the spiral staircase came this worried reminder from a friend with a good sense of humor:

***“BUY IT BUY IT BUY IT BUY IT!!!!!!!!!!!!***

*Hope there's a bathroom on first floor, so that you don't tuck your cell phone into your underwear when you climb the spiral stairs, as my friend did, in her daughter's NYC place, and then forgot about*



*her cell in her underwear by the time she climbed to the top of the spiral stairs to go to bathroom, AND THEN HER CELL FELL INTO THE TOILET WHEN SHE SAT DOWN!"*

Fortunately we have a bathroom downstairs along with two bedrooms and then another bathroom upstairs with the third bathroom.

From another friend and we couldn't have said it better:

*Florence is the birthplace of the Renaissance and it's fabulous. I'd like to spend a summer in Florence. I was there in 1978 on a once-over tour of Europe in 15 days. (London, Paris, Lucerne Switz, by train to Italy and Lake Como, Assisi, Florence and Rome). I found myself with a free afternoon in Florence. I had not done any reading before the trip. The afternoon brought Churches and the Vecchio Palace and a half-hour interchange with a wine accouterment shop keeper (He didn't speak English and I don't speak Italian) He invited me in, gave me a tour of his shop, demonstrating what some of the esoteric items were for, It was a lovely and very informative half hour after which we shook hands, did a bit of bowing as thanks, and I went on my way. About 4:00pm, walking down an arcade to the left of the Vecchio Palace, I saw a small sign that said Gallery, and the entrance price was 35 cents American. Hmm. The price was right so I went in and up the stairs into one of the most celebrated museums in the world - the Uffizi Gallery. Now, I arrived there, fresh from a marriage to an artist and teacher who believed and taught that there was no art before impressionism. (Anything before that was just copying from nature. Anything after that was creating). Well, this Gallery stayed open till 8:00 PM. When I came stumbling out of there at 8:00; I really was in shock. I had seen some of the most glorious and celebrated art on the planet and I KNEW there was art before impressionism!! Florence is a magnificent treasure trove.*

### **Sienna on our day trip with Angelica**



Tuscan countryside and Tuscan cheeses

### **Monteriggioni**

For more info: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Monteriggioni> - The town is architecturally and culturally significant; it hosts several piazzas, and is referenced in Dante Alighieri's Divine Comedy. He was a Tuscan poet and he used the turrets of Monteriggioni to evoke the sight of the ring of giants encircling the Infernal abyss.

“ però che, come su la cerchia tonda  
Montereggon di torri si corona,  
così la proda che 'l pozzo circonda  
torreggiavan di mezza la persona  
li orribili giganti, cui minaccia  
Giove del cielo ancora quando tuona. ”

—Dante Alighieri, Inferno canto XXXI, lines 40-45



“ As with circling round  
Of turrets, Monteriggioni crowns his walls;  
E'en thus the shore, encompassing the abyss,  
Was turreted with giants, half their length  
Uprearing, horrible, whom Jove from heaven  
Yet threatens, when his muttering thunder rolls. ”

We listened to the reading of Dante and it was inspiring. Darned if I can find the picture of the costumed performer.



Italy's original Wall Street with twin towers then back to Florence after a very long, educable and enjoyable day.

***Emails from the trip.*** Remember Tom and I were in different towns for part of the hiking trip. From a friend: *Hotel rooms are like a box of chocolates... you never know what you're going to get!*

How true! From the sublime in Lucca to the ridiculous in Portovenere. Pat wanted to know about these monastery digs.



From Tom: This small room and tiny bath is all ours for the next two nights! Nice view though. However, tonight's group dinner is a boat ride to a small island where al fresco is planned!! The wind is at 25 to 30 MPH and the water is pretty choppy and a 60% chance of showers so I think I'm going to opt out unless there's a change in the plan. Very neat and picturesque little village but . . . .

Tom from Lucca then Portovenere: I just finished a very pleasant dinner being served by Luigi, the waiter, chef and everything else (this evening at least). I had lasagna with fresh mushrooms that he recommended and it was thin, béchamel sauce maybe, and just enough with a glass of locale red. Then a macaroon style dessert that was excellent (also recommended.). Followed by an espresso with piccolo caldo latte (a little hot milk). Then, I blew all the staff away (four people) with a visit to tomskoi.com standing around the front desk monitor. So don't be surprised if you get a warm reception when you check in tomorrow. Made my day.

Change in plans. I'm not going to Parma. I'll let you know later where I'm spending the next couple of night. I hope to be staying in the Hotel Paradiso in Portovenere but haven't got that confirmed yet.

From Tom to Pat: Good (very early) morning Pat, I think because we had two "feasts" with the tour group, I just was overfed. However, I had pureed potato with white truffle topped with a sunny-side up egg with runny yolk and devoured it. The suggested ravioli with a Bolognese type (but local) meat sauce was delicious too but just too much. Lovely local wine (a white suggested by the owner) and an espresso with just a little hot milk was my dessert. I got lost coming home but had enough Italian to ask and eventually made it back to this lovely suite in the Piccolo Ritz (little Ritz!!) and as you saw, but so nice.

I've only seen a bit of the old town and so I've decided to forego the Parma portion of the trip in order to see more here. And of course, there will be photos. Lucca is a pretty big town but the center core/old town is a maze of tiny streets, etc., etc.

Diana got a cold a couple of days ago and poor gal, is suffering some (but of course she's still out there on the trails). They have a wonderful guide - Angelica - who lives in Florence - that we may hire as our guide there (at a mere 190 Euro a day). Really great gal and we hit it off well.

Tom to Diana: Hi honey, So sorry to hear that you're cold is causing you to feel down. Also sorry that face time didn't work. You probably saw that I'd rung through a few times too. Thanks goodness for email. Because of my rather difficult time finding the hotel (rush hour traffic et al) so knowing that I face probably an even worse situation in Parma, I've decided to forego that part of the trip, knowing that it will most likely cost me the whole two nights. I will see if my room here is available for a second night, stay here and tour more of Lucca, then drive to Portovenere the day after tomorrow. I'll of course see if the Paradisio hotel can accommodate me one day early but if that fails, I'll find another place.

This suite is really nice and very near the wall which I'll walk today then go back to the same restaurant for dinner. I had pureed potato with white truffle with a sunny-side up egg on top - runny yoke but cooked white - delicious then at the suggestion of the waitress I had a type of ravioli with a good Bolognese but couldn't finish it. Nice white local wine, no dessert, then an espresso with a bit of milk. Just right. Then of course got lost coming home but finally made it as I mentioned, none the worse for wear (good thing I can walk!). Anyway, big comfortable king sized bed, small but beautiful bathroom as you saw and a big room.

Diana to Tom on 10/08: Well I have a good Wi-Fi but maybe you aren't continually hooked up. We had a late dinner and it is almost 11 o'clock. I have tried a number of times to reach you by face time. Since IM very tired and pretty much under the weather I'm going to stop trying to reach you now. I might try again either before or after breakfast. But please do not worry if I do not because again I'm pretty much under the weather. I am going to set my alarm clock for the latest time possible. Tomorrow is our free evening and I am going to eat a peanut butter sandwich. Hope your dinner was great. Ours was pretty spectacular with lots of laugh plus grappa plus the liquors. PS. We had black ink squid Risotto. Too funny.

Tom to Diana from Lucca: The owner has no English. Bit retarded but very nice 20s son with some so we're communicating somewhat. I have a reservation for a restaurant that serves local style food - 8 o'clock reservation.

I took the coastal/scenic route then up in the mountains above Cinque Terra. Hairy stuff and very high up. Had lunch at a retreat kinda place - about a 3 but by that time I was starving. Some trouble finding the place in Lucca, got a taxi to lead me but a truck got between us and I couldn't see a turn he took so lost him. Then I saw the street name for the hotel, asked in a flower shop - tiny English but the hotel was only half a block further. The Garmin was very little help and had me in a pedestrian section that I could have gotten a ticket for. People were looking at me a bit strange but I finally got out and found the taxi. Left Santa M around 10-10:15 and only got here at 6! If I had taken the autoroute it might have been a couple of hours. But, saw some beautiful scenery and got to turn the wheel a lot!!! The car did fine and I finally got on the autostrada, saw a sign for Lucca and after much anguish (well, at least a little) here I am and the place is really nice as you see. More pics coming. Since the wifi seems to be fine now and my keyboard is working and, I have a scotch in hand (or at least handy), things are looking up.

### ***Daily diaries including many of the menus***

*Portofino* - Diana is in a state of nirvana. Everybody is beautiful. Everything is wonderful. What a wonder that we can be here. And with Tom to boot. Yet costs are wild: 42 euros for 2 Aperol spritz. Honest! Waterside with food tidbits at least. Watching the tourists get into a water taxi for likely a 300 euro short trip. That after buying the requisite Portofino shirt. Tom looked at a group 120 euro boat ride but it was out of a small town too far away and only operated in perfect weather.

Restaurant for first night's dinner oddly didn't serve coffee. Never. No busted machine just no coffee.

Super walk way up and around the hill to tour a castle. Most recently renovated by a fellow named Mumm. Lots of historical pictures from early 1900s. Castle built in 1400s. Even Tom thought the hike up was worth it. Walked to another seaside town called Parragi all along the water but up in the oak trees and overlooking farm houses, streams and mossy walkways. It was on the way to our next towns stay and might be the first hike of the tour. As usual we found a seaside bar. Rested up and walked back under a cloudy sky.

You thought the max church bells bongs was 12 for 12 o'clock? Wrong. In Portofino Tom counted and named it 48 o'clock one morning. (I think there are four churches all on a different clock unsynchronized.) Fortunately I don't hear well.

*Santa Marguerita* – on Sunday. Hiked the lower route into Portofino then ferry back via Rapello. Dinner is 8:30 at Ristorante la Darsena. After aperitifs and tidbits of food in hotel lobby. Antipasta included Octopus with potatoes, Prawns whole, Scampi – larger, Shrimp and zucchini pasta and clams with spaghetti. Then Dorado with potatoes and olives aka Sea Brem and Prawns Salad. 4 choices of dessert plus Limoncello, Grappa then Coffees.

*Monday* - Bus 20 minutes ascent to Ruta, Coastal roman road. We changed to an easier route than listed by taking the bus up then 1-2 hours asphalt type hike to Punta Chippa from Ruta. San Fruttuoso the ancient monastery for lunch. Then options where I took the tough hike and others took the ferry back. Lunch at Monastery at San Fruttuoso was local lettuce and tomatoes and mozzarella, lasagna with pesto and local wines. Dinner was high up next to church and over the fish market and called La Lampara. Big fish meal. I had a cold and left early. Included Pastas, Potatoes with olives, Grilled vegetables, whole fish. It took forever.

*Tuesday* - Train to Framura taking about 45 minutes. Walk to Bonassola about three hours with varied terrain and always views. Lunch a major treat. Outdoors at a restaurant called The Three Roses. Salad with smoked swordfish and a parm type cheese sprinkled with balsamic. Plate of sardines/ anchovies to put on toasts that are first buttered. This was a big favorite and we'd order it again and again. Wines. Gelato. "Drowned coffee" i.e., gelato inside. Decadent. Then walked to levant for strolling in town. Bought new hiking poles and I got a pharmacy shop. Then train. Dinner in old town Manoroso at outdoor cafe. Big deal was the black ink squid pasta risotto.

*Wednesday* – morning to Corniglia by walking from Vernasa. Lunch on own. Well rather I did. They ate together. Angelica sent some cheese pastry into the bar for me. In the afternoon Angelica took pity on those of us who came to hike vs stroll so after Corniglia we hiked high up and then down to Manorola. Michael and me. I would later get my big compliment: "You're one tough ole broad."

*Thursday* - Moved out of hotel. Tour of two villages with train in between. Manorola. Viamaggorie for coffee. Hiked wine route. Lunch in Manorola at Marina Piccola overlooking sea. Black squid pasta tagliolette. Pasta with langoustine. Fried fish, vegetables, squid, octopus, shrimp, langoustine. Lemon sorbet out of a machine. Dinner at Locanda Lorena on the adjoining island after a windy and cold boat trip there. Antipasto Shrimp, tomato bell pepper soup, Stuffed Moules, Potato flan, mixed salad, lobster salad with onions and tomato, Calamari gratin, Fried dough over fish Squid, fried Fococcio with cheese. With Prosecco and/or chianti. Then Pasta ie primi Penne with tomato with shrimp, And a liquor. Taglonini w green beans, potato, and pesto. Then main course or Secondo of huge platter of scampi, Potatoes, Whole dorado or sea bass or branzino, Langoustine. Various deserts

*Friday* - Boat across to island to hike up 1500' for views. Lunch in old town: A bean soup, Anchovies in oil, Octopus salad, Pesto lasagna, Sicilian after dinner wine. Dinner at La Chiglia at Waterfront and glad I didn't miss it. Pasta with shrimp, arugula and white truffles. Grilled tuna

Blog by Angelica Turi, our hiking leader then guide in Florence for two days. Hope this recent post didn't have anything to do with OUR table manners!

### **Italian rules at the table**

*To prevent "the boot" from becoming too tight .. it can be vital to get know a few Italian table manners!*

*Some basic survival rules can also make a good impression. We like to say, "fare bella figura". At the dining table is the most appropriate time and place to do things in the Italian way. Paradoxically, Italians are very tolerant and flexible for many things, but let me tell you, not at the table !*

*This week I will explain the what and the why behind some of these rules. An educated Italian will rarely break them, and if they are broken, the person is considered a bit childish or uneducated... at least in public dining spaces!*

*So here are some things an Italian will never do...*

#### **... Put his/her hands under the table.**

*Why? The forearms should be closer to the bust and on the table.*

*Italy is a country where there have always been warring conflicts from city to city and region to region. There have been so many conflicts in every century...*

*Therefore part of our character is to also be a bit suspicious...*

*And if a person has his hands under the table it seems as if he is fumbling with something. Perhaps a dagger?*

#### **... Sing or read while other guests are seated next to him/her.**

*Why? The table represents the ultimate venue for conviviality and conversation.*

#### **... Pour drink only in his/her own glass.**

*Those with good manners will also half-fill the glasses immediately to neighbors at the table, before drinking.*

*Why? As a gesture of courtesy and respect.*

*Engage in the toast, even if you are abstinent, get involved, and maybe only wetting the lips but always look into the other persons' eyes.*

#### **... Don't cover the glass with a hand if you don't want more drink, it could mean a spilled glass.**

*Why? Because it's not polite. Just a simple 'no thanks' is fine.*

#### **... Do not dine with coke or other beverages besides water, wine or beer.**

*Why? For proper nutrition. Our land has the oldest and the most healthy drink of the world. From generation to generation we continue to accompany the traditional meal with wine.*

#### **... Each wine is tasted with a plate that enhances its quality!**

*Usually for the aperitif or at first courses we have a glass of white wine and then we have red wine with a meat course.*

#### **... Do not drink a cappuccino during meals or at the end of a meal.**

*Eventually (it is ok) at the end of the meal, to drink a 'caffè macchiato' or have black coffee with a little milk.*

*Why? The cappuccino contains milk and thus is considered a rich food and already is in itself another digestible meal.*

*We drink cappuccino at breakfast and maybe another just before lunch (between 10 or 11am). However don't drink it at a restaurant unless you want the waiter to give you a weird face!*

*The above manners are just some advice .. but there are many other table manners which you will discover and finally ...*

#### **... At the end of each course, the cutlery should settle together with the tips pointing towards the glasses.**

*Why? This is the signal for the waiter that you have finished.*

*It is also an act of courtesy, helping the waiter to do it and thus avoids that inevitably they collapse to the ground.*

*Now I won't say anything else but... Buon Appetito...*



***Milan – where we plan to return again in September***

Last night in Italy was spent in the Sheraton Malpensa Milan airport in a very nice Club room on the concierge floor. Thank you Loudean! We had a picture out our window with views of the mountains and a reflection in their huge infinity pool. We should have taken a picture of their buffet spread which gave us hors d'oeuvres, then dinner, and lastly breakfast. What a deal.

For Tom's trip report – he went to Lucca. I wish I did too but so many places and so little time. Here are Angelica's blog notes about Lucca:

### **Lucca and its Roman origins**



*The small town of Lucca is located in western Tuscany and has a special history and micro-climate all its own. It wasn't captured by the Medici Dukes in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century as most other Tuscan city-states and remained a strongly independent city until the 19<sup>th</sup> century when it was conquered by Napoleon. In fact it is fun to walk the walls of the city, which was turned into a promenade at this time. Napoleon made his sister, Elisa Baciocchi, the "Queen of Etruria" and she ruled Lucca from 1805-1815. Afterwards Lucca became a Bourbon-Parma Duchy until eventually it become part of Tuscany and then part of unified Italy. Throughout the centuries the city became extremely wealthy due to the silk trade. Local merchants built incredible city town houses as well as magnificent countryside villas with expansive gardens with unusual and rare botanicals.*

*The atmosphere is low key but ritzy. There is something serene in the atmosphere. In fact Lucca is one of the more wealthy towns in the Region. It is flat here, so there are lots of bikes! There is a distinct feel between "inside the walls" and "outside the walls". Lucca was an ancient Roman colony founded in around 180. We can still see remains of Roman Lucca today by making our way to the piazza which was once the Roman amphitheater.*

*Just what is an amphitheater? Probably the biggest one is the Colosseum in Rome. Ancient Roman amphitheaters were major public venues often circular or oval in shape. They were used for events such as gladiator combat, chariot races, animal slayings and executions. The Romans were very fond of this type of entertainment and built many of these structures (about 230) throughout their empire. The largest amphitheaters could accommodate 40,000 – 60,000 people and the most elaborate featured many levels, arcaded façades and were elaborately decorated with marble, stucco and statuary.*



## ***Itinerary***

### **Wed Oct 2 – Diana and Tom**

6:50pm Depart Newark EWR via UA#19

### **Thu Oct 3 – Diana and Tom**

8:50am Arrive Milan MXP

Rental car Drive to Portofino in Genoa area

Apartment Portofino [www.homeaway.com](http://www.homeaway.com) #184710 – for 3 nights  
Via Roma n.23/1, Liguria, Italy (Giuseppe Caffese on bell)  
Building in front of Gucci's shop

3:00pm Meet Giuseppe, landlord, cell 39 33 41604749

Description from website: *Accommodations: 1 bedroom, 1 full bathroom plus 1/2, sleeps 4  
Located in the center of famous fisherman's village of Portofino, from always considered one of the most elegant and charming destinations in Italy. A wonderful little apartment furnished with all that you need. It's about 150 square meters, with one bedroom, a living room with kitchen and a big bathroom. All comforts are included: LCD 32-inch television and 17-inch in the bedroom, DVD, stereo etc. The beach is only 200m away, the famous 'Piazzetta' is just at 20m and so are all the tiny restaurants, bars, boutique and shops of the town.*

### **Sun Oct 6 - DAY 1 of Hike – Diana**

Hiking Host Hotel in Santa Margherita Ligure  
Address below

Summary of hike from [www.CountryWalkers.com](http://www.CountryWalkers.com)

*The Italian Riviera, which stretches from the French border to La Spezia, is dotted with old fishing ports, medieval towns, and beaches. This tour focuses on the specific area called the Riviera di Levante (the Eastern Coast), which has inspired Shelley, Byron, and Petrarch—among the world's most beloved poets. Its natural beauty and tantalizing cuisine continue to intoxicate travelers. Traditionally prepared seafood, homemade pasta, and a medley of fresh vegetables and aromatic herbs make for unforgettable dining experiences. Pesto, made from locally grown basil—the best in Italy according to the locals—is the classic pasta sauce of the region. Sciacchetrà, a hard-to-find semisweet dessert wine, is also a regional specialty whose production is limited due to the difficulty in harvesting from the ancient terraced vineyards. The Riviera di Levante is known for its spectacular cliffs, secluded coves, and La Spezia's naval port. Greeks, Saracens, Romans, Venetians, Lombards, French, and Piemontese have controlled the area throughout history; it has also been greatly influenced by trade with Sicily, Spain, and northern Africa. The year-round temperate climate, fine beaches, and the Maritime and Ligurian Apennine mountain chains contribute to the sensuous feel of this lovely area. Your walks take place in and around the Cinque Terre ("Five Lands") and the towns of Portofino and Portovenere. You follow well-established trails, through a menagerie of tiny, pastel-colored villages, with plenty of time for exploration, shopping, or savoring the sights from a seaside café.*

*I sat and watched the vessels glide  
Along the ocean bright and wide,  
Like spirit-winged chariots sent  
O'er some serenest element . . .  
And the scent of sleeping flowers  
And the coolness of the hours  
Of dew, and the sweet warmth of day  
Was scattered o'er the twinkling bay.*

– Percy Bysshe Shelley, English Romantic poet, 1792–1822

Tele - Emergency contact for hiking company: Country Walkers at (800) 464-9255 or through our website, [www.countrywalkers.com](http://www.countrywalkers.com). After hours 802 371 0109

2:00pm Start of hike trip meeting leaders in hotel lobby – check in earlier

### **Tour participants**

Angelica Turi from Firenze Italy – guide

Karen and Michael Brewer from Ellicott City, MD

Grace D'Alessio from Larchmont, NY

Carole Moran from Mamaroneck, NY

Maureen Mosh from Chicago, IL

Arrival in Santa Margherita Ligure. Nozarego to Portofino; 2 miles, easy to moderate, elevation gain of 385 ft and loss of 885 ft

After meeting at your charming in-town hotel, a brief public bus ride takes you to the village of Nozarego, the starting point for an approximate two-hour afternoon walk to the seaside resort of Portofino. From the charming sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve (situated at 500 feet above sea level), a 10-minute ascent over the luxuriant green hillside, followed by a short level stretch, brings you to the hamlet of Gave and its restored chapel, the Oratorio di San Gerolamo. From here you enjoy a wonderful view over the Abbey of Cervara, a national monument of Italy dating to the 14th century, before continuing on to Portofino in one of two directions—the route decided upon by your guide(s). The first option rewards you with a less challenging walk along a shaded, cobbled path past farmhouses, through terraced olive groves down to Paraggi, a tiny coastal town bordered by a beautiful sandy beach. An easy paved promenade, shaded beneath the canopy of a Holm oak forest, winds along the sea delivering you to the cobblestoned streets of Portofino. The alternative option departs the hamlet of Gave along an undulating path before reaching Acqua Morta and Acqua Viva, two small streams, the second so-called because it gave life to a series of 35 olive, chestnut, and wheat mills (one of which is now a visitor's center), while the former did not have any mills along its course. Reaching Olmi, the highest point of today's walk at 885 feet, you begin the long descent down a paved path into Portofino, passing by the chapel of San Sebastiano and enjoying splendid views along the way. The picturesque village of Portofino, nestled into a cove between hills, was rediscovered by the jet set shortly after World War II and is considered to be among the most beautiful Mediterranean ports. Where once only fishing boats docked in the emerald green inlet, now yachts arrive from around the world. You may choose to relax at an open-air café in the main piazza overlooking the colorful boats bobbing in the harbor, while indulging in a paciugo—a heavenly cup of strawberry and vanilla gelato (Italian ice cream) topped with fresh berries and cream. There is time to independently explore the small streets and browse the town's boutiques and shops. For stunning views of the entire bay and the Tigullian gulf, you can walk from the famous village square, simply called La Piazzetta, up to the Church of San Giorgio. Perched high above the town, this church contains relics of St. George, Portofino's patron saint. From here continue to another lookout point at the Castello Brown, a castle dating to the 16th century, before moving on to the very tip of the promontory and the Punto del Capo (Portofino lighthouse). You return to Santa Margherita via a 20-minute ferry (time and weather-dependent) or bus ride before gathering for a welcome aperitivo and orientation meeting at your hotel. Dinner tonight is a welcome feast at an inviting family-run restaurant in town. Bountiful seafood antipasti may be followed by the classical Ligurian primo, pansoti con salsa di noci (cheese-filled pasta topped with walnut sauce).

Hotel Hotel Jolanda, Santa Margherita Ligure - 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Via L. Costa, 6 [www.hoteljolanda.it](http://www.hoteljolanda.it)

Tel 011 39 0185 287512 Fax 011 39 0185 284763 Email [desk@hoteljolanda.it](mailto:desk@hoteljolanda.it)

A pleasant, small hotel decorated with charming antiques, nestled on a side street in bustling Santa Margherita Ligure. Offers a small fitness area and sauna.  
WiFi – yes?

**-Tom**

At same hotel for 2 nights with an upgraded room to a suite  
Asked to join dinner both nights – on own for payment

**Mon Oct 7 - DAY 2 of Hike - Diana**

Ruta to San Fruttuoso; 3.5 miles, moderate to challenging, elevation gain of 750 ft and loss of 1,500 ft. Additional option of San Fruttuoso to Portofino; 3 miles, moderate to challenging

After a satisfying breakfast of coffee, bread, cheese, yogurt, and fruit, you transfer by public bus to the tiny and picturesque village of Ruta, at which point you enter the Regional Park of Portofino for an approximate four-hour morning walk. An initial 45-minute, 500-foot undulating yet steady ascent along a shady trail punctuated with a series of rough steps brings you to a spectacular ridgeline trail commanding an enchanting view of the Bay of Tigullio to the east and the Bay of Paradise and city of Genova to the west. Continuing beneath a canopy of chestnut, pine, and oak trees, you traverse the Portofino promontory—ascending 160 feet over a 40-minute period—and arrive at Semaforo Nuovo (“New Signal Station”). At 1,300 feet, you are rewarded with radiant coastal views. Refueled with a snack and water break, you set off on a beautiful cliff-side path overlooking the Cala dell’Oro Bay and the Bay of Fruttuoso. The dirt trail—bordered by fragrant Mediterranean macchia, myrtle, and erries—gently climbs and descends for just over an hour at which point you reach Pietre Strette (“Narrow Stones”), an area of narrow canyons surrounding the 1,500-foot summit of the forested ridge. Over the next hour you descend several stony switchbacks and old mule paths (elevation loss of 1,500 feet) to sea level and the hamlet of San Fruttuoso. This secluded haven, which can only be reached on foot or by boat, is picturesquely situated in a small, rocky cove. Under ownership and protection of the National Trust of Italy, procedures have recently been taken to recognize this hamlet as a UNESCO World Heritage site. Following an optional swim in the inviting clear blue waters of the San Fruttuoso Bay, you sit down to a much-anticipated lunch—perhaps a fresh green salad along with the region’s signature dish, homemade pasta with pesto. Following lunch, you may accompany your guide(s) on a fascinating visit to the Abbazia di San Fruttuoso, a 10th-century medieval abbey. This afternoon, you may choose to continue on a scenic two hour walk to Portofino; otherwise opt to indulge in a bit of la dolce vita by taking a boat back to Santa Margherita (with a possible stop in Portofino). This evening you reunite at a fine seaside restaurant for a delectable dinner of typical Ligurian specialties, complemented by the region’s crisp white wine.

Hotel Jolanda, Santa Margherita Ligure – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

**-Tom**

At same hotel for 2<sup>nd</sup> night and looking to join us for dinner – paying on own

**Tue Oct 8 - DAY 2 of Hike - Diana**

Levanto to Monterosso al Mare; 3.5 miles, moderate to challenging, elevation gain and loss of 1,300 ft.

This morning a one-hour train ride brings you to the splendid seaside resort of Levanto, with breathtaking sea views along the way. Upon arrival at this ancient town, known as the “Gateway to the Cinque Terre,” you set off along its curved and colorful main street to visit its medieval frescoed loggia and Chiesa di Sant’Andrea (Church of Saint Andrew), exemplary of 13th-century Ligurian Gothic style with its façade decorated in black-and-white bands, and a magnificent rose window

crowning the main door. You may opt out of the day's scheduled walk and enjoy an independent afternoon by taking a train directly to Monterosso al Mare, the first of the Cinque Terre villages and the day's final destination. Alternatively, depart on the afternoon walk from Levanto's medieval walls on a long, gradual climb along an ancient trade route passing through olive groves and terraced vineyards. The trail eventually levels off for an easy stretch with spectacular views before beginning another rigorous ascent over rough steps through oak woods. A much easier stretch of trail ensues through a pine forest culminating at the promontory of Punta Mesco. At 1,000 feet, your hard work is rewarded with an amazing bird's-eye view of all five villages of the Cinque Terre. A final steep 45-minute descent down large stone steps delivers you to Monterosso al Mare and your family-run hotel set amidst a garden of towering palm trees, just around the corner from Fegina Bay and the best beach in the Cinque Terre. After settling in to your new home for two nights, you stroll to dinner at Ristorante La Lampara, a lively, local restaurant where you are welcomed by the legendary and charismatic chef-owner Luigi Corciulo ("Ciak") with a dazzling array of seafood antipasti—freshly-caught prawns, squid, sea snails, steamed mussels, and the highly-prized anchovies from Monterosso served fried, stuffed, marinated, or salted!

Hotel Hotel Palme, Monterosso al Mare – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Monterosso al Mare, Italy  
Tel 011 39 0187 829013 Fax 011 39 0187 829081 Email [info@hotelpalme.it](mailto:info@hotelpalme.it)  
A small and very simple hotel located in a quiet setting by the sea. There is a lovely garden shaded by palm trees, and the hotel is just a short walk from the public beach. No WiFi? Emergencies need to call the hotel.

**-Tom**  
Hotel Piccolo Ritz – 1 night  
Viale Puccini 450, Lucca 55100 Italy Tele 39 0 5831900329 [info@piccoloritz.it](mailto:info@piccoloritz.it)  
Yes free WiFi; Yes free parking

### **Wed Oct 9 - DAY 4 of Hike - Diana**

Cinque Terre: Monterosso to Vernazza; 2.5 miles, moderate with challenging sections, elevation gain and loss of approximately 700 ft

"The Five Lands" of the Cinque Terre are Monterosso al Mare, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, and Riomaggiore: five small, remote villages strung along the coast northwest of La Spezia. They are linked by boat, rail, and footpath, allowing you to customize your walking experience over the next two days. Today's scheduled walk, and arguably the most spectacular, begins in Monterosso, and continues for approximately two hours along a well-established footpath while offering views of the Ligurian Sea. After an initial lengthy climb up a steep cliffside stairway of several hundred steps, the trail winds up and down through groves of lemon, orange, and olive trees and beautifully terraced vineyards supported by hundreds of miles of hand-built dry stone walling. Known as mura a secco, these walls are a testament to the centuries of labor involved in shaping this fascinating landscape. Traversing extremely narrow trails—perched on terraces with a wall on one side and a drop of 10 to 15 feet on the other—you pass farmers at work using monorail systems to transport grapes and supplies up and down the steep hillsides. You reach Vernazza in time for lunch—likely a simple, authentic pizza or plate of homemade pasta—in the town's colorful waterfront piazza. This afternoon you are free to explore Vernazza or additional Cinque Terre villages by train, boat, or on foot. Dinner this evening is at your leisure; your guide(s) will provide suggestions from among the many dining experiences available in Monterosso al Mare.

Hotel Hotel Palme, Monterosso al Mare – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

**-Tom**

Hotel Vittorio Dalla Rosa Prati – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Strada al Duoma, 7, 43121 Parma Italy [info@palazzodallarosapрати.it](mailto:info@palazzodallarosapрати.it)  
Tele: 39 0521 386429 Fax 39 0521 502204 [www.palazzodallarosapрати.it](http://www.palazzodallarosapрати.it)  
Conf#432871596 thru booking.com

**Thu Oct 10 - DAY 5 of Hike – Diana**

Vernazza to Corniglia; 2.5 miles, moderate with challenging sections, elevation gain and loss of 700 ft. Corniglia to Manarola to Riomaggiore; 3.5 miles, easy to moderate. Transfer to Portovenere Today's exploration includes more of the picturesque "Five Lands" and culminates in the charming medieval town of Portovenere, situated at the mouth of the spectacular Golfo dei Poeti (Gulf of Poets). The gulf is so named because many poets, including Dante, Petrarch, Byron, and Shelley, have sung its praises—even the boats in the harbor sport romantic names inspired by these poets. Similar to yesterday's walk from Monterosso to Vernazza (but with fewer steps!), the trail from Vernazza to Corniglia begins with a steep ascent up a set of stone steps before leveling off through terraced vineyards clinging to seaside cliffs. The narrow trail continues for approximately two hours before reaching Corniglia, the most untouched of the Cinque Terre villages. Unlike the other villages of the Cinque Terre, Corniglia is not directly adjacent to the sea. Instead, it is on the top of a promontory more than 300 feet above the sea, surrounded on three sides by vineyards and terraces, while the fourth side descends steeply into the sea. From Corniglia, you set off on your next leg: a 45-minute walk to the cozy, classic seaside town of Manarola and the center of Cinque Terre's wine production. Comparatively easy, the route winds down a lovely little road through vegetable gardens and terraced vineyards. After a slight ascent, you are rewarded with a final cliffside stretch rich in panoramic views. Leaving the pink-colored houses of Manarola behind, your exploration of the Cinque Terre concludes with a 20-minute stroll along the Via dell'Amore (Road of Love), a scenic paved waterfront promenade leading to Riomaggiore, the southernmost of the five villages known for its historic character and colorful tower houses. A ferry ride (weather dependent) brings you to your final destination: the Roman-Byzantine town of Portovenere, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where you view both the sea and the nearby Apuan Mountains. The captivating town paints a colorful canvas against the azure sea with its tall and narrow pastel-colored houses lining the waterfront promenade. Perched high on a rocky cape overlooking the sea is San Pietro, a 13th-century Gothic church. Its black-and-white-striped exterior has made it a landmark recognizable from far out at sea. After settling in to your seaside hotel, you embark on a short boat ride to the island of Palmaria—just off the coast of Portovenere—for a magical al fresco dinner, overlooking the waters below.

Hotel Hotel Paradiso, Portovenere – 1<sup>st</sup> of 2 nights  
Via Garibaldi 36, Portovenere 19025  
Tel 011 39 0187 790612 Fax 011 39 0187 792582 Email [info@hotelportovenere.it](mailto:info@hotelportovenere.it)  
Situated on the Gulf of Portovenere, the Hotel Paradiso features comfortable guest rooms with views of the sea and nearby Apuan Alps, as well as a fine restaurant with an outdoor terrace. Wi-Fi? Yes? For a fee?

**-Tom**

Hotel Vittorio Dalla Rosa Prati – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

**Fri Oct 11 - DAY 6 of Hike - Diana**

Isola Palmaria; 2.5 miles, easy to moderate, elevation gain and loss of 1,200 ft

Following breakfast on the terrace overlooking the sea, you begin the day's adventure with a return boat trip across the bay to Palmaria. This beautiful island, declared a Natural Regional Park, boasts a network of walking paths with stunning viewpoints of its dramatic cliffs and nearby Tino Island. Disembarking in the small harbor of Terrizzo, home to the island's few homes and a restaurant, an easy 20-minute walk leads you to the meticulously restored 19th-century fortress of Umberto I, which

now houses a museum dedicated to the oceanography and undersea archeology of the Mediterranean. From this spectacular viewpoint, the trail gently ascends into a sea of terraced olive groves before leveling off through a forest of Holm oak and pinewood. The air is perfumed by sage, broom, and myrtle underfoot as you approach the southern tip of the island. Here lush Mediterranean vegetation is replaced by steep rocky cliffs, deep ravines, and abandoned quarries of the black and golden-veined Portoro marble—now home to wild goats and an extensive colony of Herring Gulls. A challenging, yet short (20-minute) climb leads to the summit where you are rewarded with unsurpassed 360-degree views. After a snack and water break, a 45-minute descent by way of an asphalt road or more challenging dirt trail returns you to the hamlet of Terrizzo, where your boat is waiting. Time and weather permitting, you boat around the island to explore several wonderful grottoes—the famous Grotta Azzurra (Blue Grotto), the Grotta Vulcanica, a volcanic grotto housing an ancient freshwater spring, and the Grotta dei Colombi, where Paleolithic evidence was discovered in the 19<sup>th</sup> century—before returning to Portovenere for lunch at a seaside trattoria. Following lunch you may accompany your guide(s) on an optional walking tour of Portovenere, whose highlights include the churches of San Pietro and San Lorenzo and the Genovese Doria Castle. This evening a stroll along the waterfront leads to an elegant restaurant for a sumptuous farewell feast of seafood from surrounding waters—sea bass grilled to perfection or tuna in a fresh anchovy and caper sauce. Ideally positioned at the mouth of the harbor, you are afforded breathtaking views of the gulf and fishing boats returning home from sea—a perfect venue for toasting your Ligurian adventure and new friends.

Hotel            Hotel Paradiso, Portovenere – 2<sup>nd</sup> of 2 nights

**-Tom**

Join Diana at same hotel in Portovenere but acquire 2<sup>nd</sup> room since they are small

**Sat Oct 12 - DAY 7 of Hike – Diana and Tom**

Arrivederci! After breakfast, CW will drive to La Spezia train station if desired

Drive from Portovenere through La Spezia via Lucca to Florence – 2 to 3 hours?

Apartment    Via Maggio 50, Florence [www.vrbo.com/421522](http://www.vrbo.com/421522) – for 4 nights  
Tiziana Serra di Cassano landlord, cell 0039 338 6639282 call or text to advise arrival  
time to apartment; [tiseca@alice.it](mailto:tiseca@alice.it) or t.serra@aol.com  
Parking at Garage Fosi about 50 meters from apartment at 22Euros day  
Yes WiFi and yes washer and dryer

Dinner            Eat white truffled pasta at Osteria del Cinghiale Bianco “White Boar” at #43 Borgo S.  
Jacopo per KV. Directions on Grand Hotel Baglioni map

**Florence ideas from CW:** This four-day stay in Florence delights with its combination of the city's best known art, history, culture, and cuisine—from your base in a luxurious hotel on the banks of the Arno River within walking distance of Florence's main attractions. A customized walking tour gives you an in-depth perspective on the city's artistic and historic past and charming present. Equally crucial, a half-day class in the art and taste of Tuscan cuisine and wine is an easy lesson to attend and includes a local market tour and wine testing.

Day 1- Upon your arrival in Florence, you check into the perfectly situated Hotel Lungarno—along the River Arno, a stone's throw from Ponte Vecchio, the Uffizi, and the main shopping area—it is also just a 10-minute walk to the narrow streets of “the real Florence.” There are no scheduled activities this afternoon, leaving you time to settle in and begin to enjoy Florence. In essence a vast and beautiful monument to the Renaissance—the paintings and sculptures of artists such as Botticelli, Michelangelo, and Donatello turned the city into one of the world's greatest artistic capitals.

Day 2 - Walking tour of Florence with expert guide, easy city walking (4 hours) - After breakfast in the hotel, you depart for a customized walking tour of Florence with a local expert guide, who will tailor the itinerary to suit your areas of interest and whether or not you have visited Florence before. For a first visit to Florence, the following highlights are suggested: Piazza della Signoria, one of the most beautiful squares in the world, with a backdrop of the medieval Palazzo Vecchio, the city's seat of government for over 700 years; Piazza del Duomo, the Cathedral square, especially appreciated for the graceful Gothic bell-tower and the Romanesque baptistery with its beautiful gilded bronze doors, the “Gates of Paradise” by Lorenzo Ghiberti, and of course Brunelleschi's Dome, the largest dome ever built in masonry; The Ponte Vecchio, or “old bridge,” and its tantalizing jewelry shops. Also suggested are lesser-known corners and quiet neighborhoods, all steeped in history and expressing the superlative quality of its artists and craftsmen throughout. Free afternoon. Here are some suggested sites:

**Uffizi:** The Uffizi, Italy's great art gallery, originally constructed from 1560 to 1580 to house offices for Duke Cosimo I. The original architect, Vasari, used iron as reinforcement, enabling his successor, Buontalenti, to create an almost continuous wall of glass on the upper story, which Francesco I used as a gallery to display the Medici art treasures. The collection was divided up in the 19th century: ancient objects went to the archaeological museum and sculpture to the Bargello, leaving the Uffizi with a matchless collection of paintings.

**Accademia:** The Academy of Fine Arts, founded in 1563, was the first school established in Europe specifically to teach the techniques of drawing, painting, and sculpture. The art collection displayed here was formed in 1784 with the aim of providing material for students to study and copy. The most famous work on display is Michelangelo's David (1504), a colossal nude of the biblical hero who killed the giant Goliath. Other masterpieces here include the Quattro Prigioni sculpted between 1521 and 1523 and intended to adorn the tomb of Pope Julius II.

**Bargello:** Built in 1255, the Bargello is the oldest seat of government surviving in Florence. In the 16th century it was the residence of the chief of police and a prison: executions took place here until 1786. After extensive renovation, it became one of Italy's first national museums in 1865. The Bargello houses a superb collection of Florentine Renaissance sculpture, with rooms dedicated to the work of Michelangelo, Donatello, and Cellini, as well as a collection of Mannerist bronzes.

**Palatine Gallery:** The Palatine Gallery was added to Palazzo Pitti by the Medici Family in the 17th century. The Gallery contains a superb collection of works dating from the Renaissance and Baroque. They are hung as the 17th and 18th century Medici Grand Dukes wished, placed purely for their effect, regardless of subject or chronology. The decoration of the rooms in the gallery reflects the tastes and preoccupations of the time.

Day 3 - Florence cooking lesson with market visit and wine tasting class (total of 5½ hours)  
Following breakfast in the hotel, a transfer is provided from your hotel just before 9:00 am to the Apicius Culinary Institute—for a full morning of shopping, cooking, and enjoying the end product for

lunch. Named for the greatest expert of gastronomy in antiquity, Apicius wrote the most important cooking treatise in Latin “*De Re Coquinaria*,” revealing the evolution in taste, in terms of food and lifestyle, of the Roman upper class. Fittingly, the Apicius Culinary Institute associates cooking with the historic and artistic background of Italy—cooking classes are designed for both beginners to “the art of Italian cooking” as well as experienced cooks who wish to deepen their knowledge. Before beginning the hands-on class, your instructor leads you on an hour-long walking tour of the local produce market, to choose the freshest ingredients for the lesson. Returning to the kitchen, you join the Chef in preparing a menu of traditional and delicious Tuscan fare. A typical meal might begin with an appetizer of mushroom *crostini*, a first course (or “*primo*”) of artichoke ravioli with pecorino cheese sauce, a second course (or “*secondo*”) of chicken Florentine style, and for dessert, a classic Tuscan chestnut cake with raisins, pine nuts, and rosemary. You sit down to enjoy the lunch you have created with your own hands. Of course, integral to an Italian meal is wine, and proceeding to the Apicius Tasting Room, a professional sommelier guides you through the basic steps of wine testing—introducing you to three fine Tuscan wines (one red, one white and a dessert wine). A recipe booklet and apron are provided to each guest as part of this culinary experience.

**Wed Oct 16 – Diana and Tom**

Depart to Milan and turn in rental car early

Hotel            Sheraton Milan Malpensa Airport Hotel and Conference Center  
                    Malpensa Terminal 1, 2.S. 336, Malpensa 21010 Italy

**Thu Oct 17 – Diana and Tom**

10:20am        Depart Milan MXP via UA#18  
1:40pm         Arrive Newark EWR