

La Dolce Vita Wine Tours

PIEDMONT & CINQUE TERRE TRAILS



Experience the best of both worlds: Piedmont, with its vine-covered hills, woodland cuisine, and regal red wines. And the Cinque Terre, with its fishing villages, seafood, and white wines. Hike through Barolo vineyards and on the Riviera's coastal mountains on this surf 'n' turf combo, Italian style!

2014 dates

June 1–7 // August 31–September 6

Meet

Tortona train station (near Milan)

Price

\$3,495

Single supplement: \$400

Depart

Sestri Levante

HIGHLIGHTS

- Hike in **two distinctive regions** of Italy: Piedmont and Liguria
- Enjoy private, **sit-down tastings** of Barolo, Gavi and Ligurian wine
- See the **Cinque Terre** and **Portofino**
- Lunch at an **artisan cheese farm** in Piedmont

DAY 1 – THE BIRTHPLACE OF BAROLO

After a 10 A.M. pick-up at the Tortona train station (1 hour south of Milan), we shuttle to the Langhe hills (an hour's drive), where Piedmont's best wines are born. Our warm-up hike goes from Monforte to Barolo to Castiglione Falletto following the **Barolo Wine Trail**, which cuts through prized vineyards and chestnut groves. The hike is divided into two parts, each about an hour long, with a **complementary welcome lunch** in the middle. Our lunch spot is a homey family-run restaurant in the village of Barolo. They'll bring a parade of classic *piemontese* appetizers and *primi* to the table, including *uova in pasta*, pâté with caramelized red onions, tagliatelle with porcini mushrooms, and *bonet* (chocolate–amarretti pudding). We'll hike some more after lunch (gotta burn those calories!), then return by van to the town of Barolo. Here we'll pass by the **Castle of Barolo**, where we'll hear the story of Barolo wine's creation in the 1800s by a French-born Marchesa. Finally, we'll tour her historic estate just 100 yards away—the **Marchesi di Barolo**—and have a tasting that introduces *barbera*, *nebbiolo*, and *Barolo* in both traditional and modernist styles. Dinner will be at a charming restaurant in the Langhe hills, where we might spot local winemakers. *L, D • Hotel Barolo*

PIEDMONT & CINQUE TERRE TRAILS

DAY 2 – ON THE BAROLO WINE TRAIL

Today we'll pick up another part of the **Barolo Wine Trail** and do a loop hike from La Morra. We'll walk through some of Barolo's most famous vineyards, including Brunate and Cerequio, getting a close-up look at nebbiolo grapes (the basis for Barolo), as well as barbera and dolcetto, which make fruity wines found on every *piemontese* dinner table. We'll pass by such local landmarks as the colorful Brunate Chapel (a Ceretto property) and the towering cedar planted in 1856 by ancestors of the Cordero di Montezemolo winery. After lunch back in La Morra, we'll shuttle to the nearby commune of Verduno for our afternoon tasting. We'll visit **Fratelli Alessandria**, a boutique winery situated in the family's 18th century house; their vineyards were likely sourced by King Carlo Alberto for the wine he made at the Verduno castle. Not only does F.lli Alessandria make stellar Barolos and Barberas; they're also one of only 12 producers in the world who make Pelaverga, a light, spicy red indigenous to this village. One of the family members will pour them all and offer a comparison between Barolo *cru* in Verduno and Monforte. Dinner offers more of Piedmont's refined cuisine, such as meat-stuffed *agnolotti* and beef braised in Barolo. *B, D • Hotel Barolo*

DAY 3 – MOUNTAIN CHEESE IN THE ALTE LANGHE

Piedmont's Alte Langhe ("high hills of the Langhe") are renowned for their cheese. Here the elevation is too high for grapes, so hazelnut groves, pasture land, and chestnut woods dominate the rolling landscape. Today's hike is point-to-point, crossing two valleys on the Tanaro trail; this follows the old *Via del Sale*, the salt road on which salt and other goods were transported inland from Liguria. After we wrap up the hike, we'll shuttle the rest of the way to **lunch at an artisan cheese farm** near the town of Murazzano. Here we'll have a tour, then sit down to a buffet of freshly made DOP cheese, salumi, and other regional treats, accompanied by the local Dolcetto di Dogliani wine. More wine follows at our afternoon tasting. We'll shuttle to Monforte and the scenic hilltop estate of **Fantino Conterno**. Here we'll taste award-winning single-vineyard Barolos, plus Barbera bottled according the cycles of the moon. For dinner, we go to **Alba**, capital of red-wine country in Piedmont. We'll dine at a **Slow Food-affiliate restaurant**, where we might enjoy such gnocchi with melted cheese, roasted guinea fowl with rosemary, and panna cotta with fresh berries. *B, L, D • Hotel Barolo*

DAY 4 – RING AROUND GAVI DI GAVI

Today we transfer from Piedmont to the Riviera. En route, we'll stop in the white wine district of **Gavi** (1-hour drive). After a cappuccino and soft amaretti cookies at Bar Matteo (a favorite haunt of Dolce Vita cofounder Claudio Bisio during his teen years), we'll climb up to the **Fortress of Gavi**. A truly impressive fort that kept adding layers of fortification as Genoa and Milan fought over this turf, it illustrates the cutting-edge military architecture of its day. We'll scoot back down the hill for lunch at a trattoria frequented by local workers. Then it's time for a tasting of Gavi di Gavi, the first white wine of Italy to gain international fame. Our winery of choice is **Villa Sparina**, a preeminent leader in Gavi and one of *Wine Spectator's* 10 "Italian Wineries to Watch" in 2008. Villa Sparina's 4-star hotel has a patio overlooking the vineyards, which is one of the most pleasant settings for an al fresco tasting you'll ever

PIEDMONT & CINQUE TERRE TRAILS

find. We then continue our drive south to the Riviera town of **Sestri Levante** (1-1/4 hour), where we'll settle into our second hotel, a seaside spot overlooking the Bay of Silence. Dinner is on your own at one of Sestri Levante's many excellent fish restaurants.

B • Grand Hotel dei Castelli

DAY 5 – PORTOFINO & THE RIVIERA CLIFFS

In the Riviera, the landscape changes entirely. The Ligurian mountains tumble straight to the sea, with colorful houses and umbrella pines clinging to the hills. Today we'll climb those hills in a spectacular point-to-point hike, starting in the fishing village of **Camogli**. The first leg goes through town, ascending ancient steps that pass tiny houses and private walled gardens, arriving at the overlook of San Rocco. The next part takes us up through the woods to the rocky ridges on top of the promontory, where there are spectacular views at every turn. Then there's a long descent to **San Fruttuoso**, a medieval abbey and tower of the Doria dynasty, located in a protected cove. After lunch, we'll catch a 20-minute ferry to **Portofino**, a picturesque village where amorous movie stars once hid from *papparazzi*, where we'll soak up the sun, browse the shops, or catch a bite to eat. Then we take another short ferry to Santa Margherita and finally a train back to Sestri, arriving in the late afternoon. Today's wine tasting will be at our hotel overlooking the scenic bay, clanging boats, and setting sun. Here we'll have an **introduction to Ligurian wine**, spotlighting seafood-friendly Vermentino and its cousin Pigato. Dinner will feature the Riviera's fresh-from-the-sea cuisine, including a tender Mediterranean bass with tomatoes and herbed roasted potatoes. *B, D • Grand Hotel dei Castelli*

DAY 6 – THE CINQUE TERRE TRAIL

The fame of the Cinque Terre ("five lands") is well deserved, with its sweeping vistas and charming seaside villages. Now a national park, the **Cinque Terre trail** passes through five towns. We'll take a trail to our trailhead and hike through four, going from **Vernazza to Riomaggiore** (with an optional leg from Monterosso for the heartiest hikers). The first part of the trail takes us up and down mountain steps, past wild fragrant scrub and ancient terraces carved from the rock by monks and Ligurian tribes in order to cultivate olive trees and grapes. A handful of heroic wine producers continue the work the land, wrestling limited quantities of grapes from this vertical, rocky terrain. The second part is a broader cinder and stone trail that's gently rolling, while the third is an easy sidewalk stretch known as *Via dell' Amore*, or Lovers Lane. We return by train, then again convene at our hotel for an informal tasting before dinner, this time spotlighting such obscure regional reds as the herbaceous *Rosesse di Dolcequa*. Our farewell dinner at a bayside restaurant offers excellent haute renditions of local cuisine. *B, D • Grand Hotel dei Castelli*

DAY 7 – ARRIVEDERCI!

A shuttle to the Sestri Levante train station and assistance with your travel plans. *B*

Please bear in mind that this itinerary is made one year in advance, so details may change due to the winemakers' schedule (especially during harvest), hotel availability, weather, and other unforeseen circumstances. Any substitutions will be with a property of equivalent interest and value.

PIEDMONT & CINQUE TERRE TRAILS

What's included

- 6 nights accommodations (double room) in two 3-star hotels, with breakfast buffet
- 5 gourmet dinners (three courses with wine)
- 2 lunches: welcome lunch & cheese farm
- All wine tastings mentioned
- Shuttle at beginning/end of tour, as described

What's not included

- Air travel
- Train to meeting point (Tortona train station)
- 1 dinner on your own and most lunches
- After-dinner drinks, or special wines at tastings that are not part of what is provided to the group
- Items of a personal nature