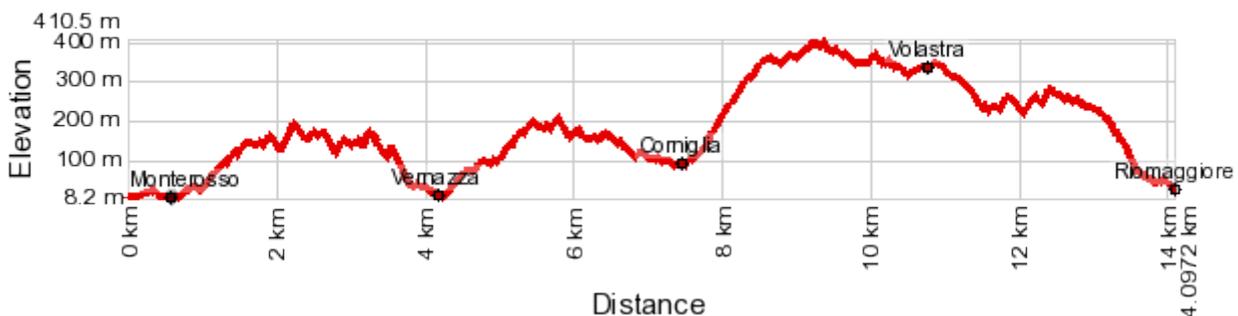




Leg 4 from Monterosso to Riomaggiore

Total length	14,6 km
Hiking time	7h 15m
Cumulative elevation gain	818 m
Uphill percentage	50,4 %
Downhill percentage	49,6 %
Percentage of hike on natural earth	51,5 %
Percentage of hike on asphalt	7,6 %
Percentage of hike on paved surface	41,0 %
Percentage of hike on other surface	0 %

Profilo altimetrico



General description:

This leg covers the whole Cinque Terre area, running through extraordinary natural and manmade landscapes. The itinerary is strenuous due to the total elevation gain, given by the many ascents and descents between one village and the following one. In some parts the trail is exposed. The route crosses small hamlets halfway the slopes, like Prevo, Volastra and Groppo, but reaches also the villages of Vernazza Corniglia and Corniglia, while a short detour allows to visit Manarola. The hike through the vineyards of Volastra is gorgeous. The leg can be walked in one day, even if it's difficult to limit your stay in these unique villages.



Description of the itinerary

Where possible, the Sentiero Liguria follows coastal itineraries. In the Cinque Terre it tracks the so called Sentiero Verde Azzurro (SVA – Green Blue Trail) the most direct connection between the different villages. As there are no coastal paths, this trail climbs up the promontories and passes over the ridges before descending to the next village. This is an effort for the hiker, but it's nothing compared to the effort of the farmers, who walked daily on this trails to farm the land, to build and maintain the walls, to transport the harvested products. The charm of this excursion is all in this effort: proceed slowly on this strenuous trails, taking your time to admire and read this "manmade landscape", where every stone, every plant tells the effort made by the population in order to survive in the Cinque Terre through the centuries.

In Monterosso the trail to Vernazza starts near the beach in front of the old centre. In its first part the trail climb steeply up through olive groves and vineyards. Once you gain the height of 150 metres a.s.l. the trail becomes almost plane and highly scenic. You will pass the Aquapendente dip (one of the wider sections of this trail), where you will cross a characteristic stone bridge. The trail runs eastwards through the farmed terraces and is sometimes quite narrow. You will have to pay attention, especially on busy days.

The arrival in Vernazza, near the Church of Santa Margherita di Antiochia, with beautiful views over the marina, the bright coloured facades and the Castle, is amazing. The itinerary continues on the opposite side of the main alley.

Vernazza and Corniglia are connected by the Sentiero Verde Azzurro (Green and Blue Trail). This is the wildest section, where you can size up the never ending fight between the constructive forces (in this case man, with his farming activity) and the destructive forces (represented by the rock slides which try to balance the geomorphology of the area). Particularly scenic is the rockslide of San Bernardino.

Corniglia is different from the other villages, due to its elevated position upon the sea. The old centre is worth a visit. Following the mail "carugio" (alley), you reach the beautiful scenic outlook. Even if the cellars have been transformed in little tourist shops, you can still feel the farmers atmosphere of the village, wrapped tight around itself in order to use less farming space as possible.

Between Corniglia and Riomaggiore the Sentiero Liguria follows an alternative route to the fascinating coastal paths, like the famous Via dell'Amore (Lovers Path) and the coastal path between Manarola and Corniglia, as the latter are often closed due to rock and landslides.

Therefore the itinerary follows the trail to Case Pianca, marked with n°587, which starts near the Church of San Pietro (with its magnificent marble rose window). The first section is quite strenuous, but at the altitude of 370 m a.s.l. the route continues on the trail to Volastra, marked with n° 586, which runs almost flat between extended vineyards. It is like an amazing time-travel, if you only imagine the entire slope worked out in terraces, with any stone and single plant under strict control of the farmers: that's how it must have been until the mid-1900s.

The Sanctuaries Trail runs just a bit higher. The presence of the two trails facilitated the hard work of the farmers, who, in this area, maintained the terraces through the centuries.

This section ends in Volastra near the interesting Sanctuary of Nostra Signora della Salute, in pure Romanesque style, with a beautiful sandstone facade. Volastra is really "suspended", leaning on a relatively flat terrace (therefore its terraces are mostly farmed with olive trees), that ends right above the so called "landslide of Volastra", which can be seen from the sea between Manarola and Corniglia. A small tract on asphalt leads to Groppo: the trail crosses the old hamlet, before climbing up a little bit more until the road, from where it continues as trail n°532c. This tract maintains the same altitude until Costa del Corniolo, the ridge separating the Valley of Manarola from the one of Riomaggiore. Walk down the ridge on the trail marked n°532, until the intersection with the trail of Beccara (marked with n° 531). This was the main connection between the two villages, before the opening of the Via dell'Amore during the last century. Descending towards Riomaggiore you will see the farmed terraces that have been restored by the Park. As an alternative, it's possible to descend to Manarola and reach Riomaggiore by train.