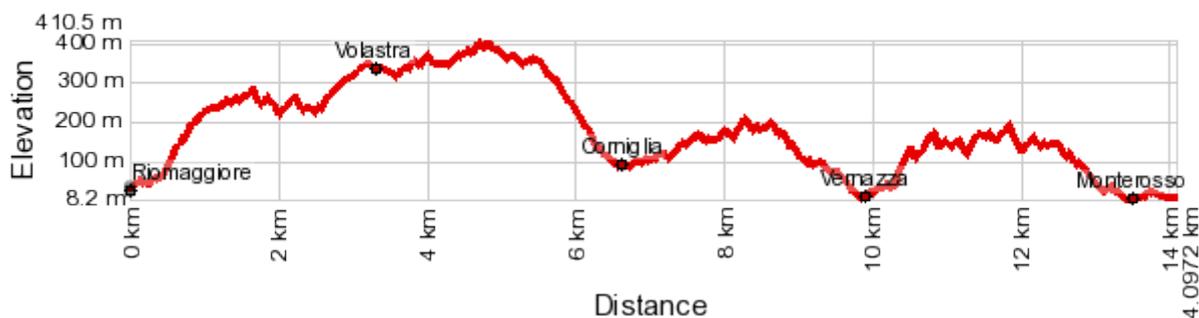




Leg 4 from Riomaggiore to Monterosso

Total length	14,6 km
Hiking time	7h 15m
Cumulative elevation gain	797 m
Uphill percentage	49,6 %
Downhill percentage	50,4 %
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



created by GPSVisualizer.com

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 Groppo, Volastra and Prevo, but reaches also the villages of Corniglia and Vernazza, 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

The Sentiero Liguria crosses the National Park of Cinque Terre by following 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.

Where men tried to shortcut the original ways of communication, opening coastal paths by using modern techniques and materials, the nature rebelled. So the fascinating paths Via dell'Amore (the Lovers Path) and the coastal path between Manarola and Corniglia are often closed due to rock and landslides. Therefore, the Sentiero Liguria follows an alternative route to the coastal one.



From Riomaggiore, you can reach Manarola and Corniglia following the trail of the Beccara: from the railway station, you walk up the trail marked with n° 531, crossing the channel. The very steep staircase leads to the scenic ridge. From the ridge, you can descend to Manarola by following the trail n° 531 and reach Corniglia following the SVA trail. Unfortunately the rocks forming the cliffs in this area are very fragile, and this low trail is often closed for safety reasons. That's why the Sentiero Liguria has the following variant.

Once you reach the ridge with the trail marked n° 531, take the trail marked with n° 532 to walk up the ridge of Costa di Corniolo, where you will see the farmed terraces that have been restored by the Park. From the flat segment, before it climbs up again, take the trail marked with n° 532c running northwards towards Groppo. You will notice that the northern slopes have been abandoned since a longer time and are now covered by full grown forests.

Near the hamlet of Groppo, follow the road crossing the centre to quickly reach Volastra. 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. 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. Nowadays the walk between Volastra and Corniglia (on the trail running halfway the coastal slope, marked with n° 586) represents an ideal 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.

After almost one hour you will reach Case Pianca, from where the descend to Corniglia through a steep staircase (marked with n° 587) starts. You will pass through abandoned terraces and pine forests damaged by a known parasite, the Cochineal of the maritime pine.

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.

Corniglia and Vernazza are connected by the Sentiero Verde e 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.

The arrival in Vernazza, from the "back side" of the village, with its tower, the bright coloured houses, the sea and the coastline ensures one of the most enchanting pictures of the Cinque Terre.

From Vernazza to Monterosso, the Sentiero Verde Azzurro (SVA) climbs 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. The trail runs westwards through the farmed terraces and is sometimes quite narrow. You will have to pay attention, especially on busy days. In one of the wider sections of the trail, the Aquapendente dip, you will cross a characteristic stone bridge. The trail continues with a steep staircase down to Monterosso, passing through vineyards, lemon trees and small vegetable gardens surrounded by stone walls.