

Untold Italy Episode 106 - Beyond the Cinque Terre: Exploring Liguria

This is the Untold Italy Travel podcast, and you're listening to episode number 106.

Ciao a tutti and Benvenuti to Untold Italy, the travel podcast, where you go to the towns and villages, mountains and lakes, hills and coastlines of Bella Italia. Each week your host Katy Clarke takes you on a journey in search of magical landscapes of history, culture, wine, gelato, and, of course, a whole lot of pasta. If you're dreaming of Italy and planning future adventures there, you've come to the right place.

Katy

Ciao! Hi everyone. Welcome to another episode of Untold Italy where we are going to one of my favorite Italian regions. It's a region that many visitors dip into but rarely see very much of, beyond a handful of places.

And it is of course Liguria, home to the famous (for very good reason) Cinque Terre villages.

If you've ever been captivated by those colorful towns that seem to tumble into the sea, then prepare to be amazed. As we'll discover, there's plenty of places like those along the Ligurian coastline that stretches all the way from Tuscany to France.

Our guest today is Enrica Manzoni, founder of the delightful A Small Kitchen in Genoa - a bilingual food blog where she shares recipes and food stories from the Italian Riviera. Enrica hosts cooking classes in her home kitchen and organizes food tours in Genoa and culinary retreats in Liguria. She also runs online cooking classes featuring the dishes from her region. She's a very busy woman so I am delighted that she took some time to join us on the show. Let's meet her now

Katy

Benvenuta Enrica. Ciao and welcome on to the Untold Italy podcast.

Enrica

Ciao, Katy, thank you for having me here in Untold Italy podcast. I'm very happy to be here.

Katy

It's so lovely to have you on the show today. Joining us from beautiful Genoa in the region of Liguria. It's one of my favorite regions in Italy, and I can't wait to hear you share some of your secrets, but please tell our listeners a little bit about yourself and your story.

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Enrica

Well, I'm born and bred in Genoa, so I live outside Italy just for a few periods of time. But most of my life was done here. I graduated in law and I actually practiced as a lawyer for 15 years. Then after my boy was born, my first boy was born, I decided to change my life to do something completely different and devote myself to my passions - if it is possible to say that. So I opened a food blog called A Small Kitchen in Genoa, which is still online and which is my homebase - internet homebase, let's say. And from there I started giving cooking classes in English for foreigners, regional cooking classes, because that is my core and my niche. So I decided to tell people food stories about Liguria and teach Ligurian cuisine. So this is my new life around cooking and Liguria, both passions I have and food photography as well, because I also work as a food photographer. What I'm doing now is this - giving cooking classes and food experiences around the Liguria and sharing recipes and stories of my land.

Katy

Amazing! Brava! All our listeners just know how much I love Italian food, and it's really important to me to share the regional cuisine because obviously everything is so regional and so don't know what a thrill it was for me to find you on Instagram, but the reason I wanted to chat with you, of course, also about food, but I really wanted you to help our listeners understand a little bit about Liguria, the region that you're from, because I think a lot of people may know the Cinque Terre villages, but they may not ever go anywhere else in this region and you what I think it's is a big shame. But anyway, let's start by telling everyone a little bit about where Liguria is and what it's kind of most famous for.

Enrica

Yes, I totally agree that Liguria is much more beyond Cinque Terre. Though the Cinque Terre is fantastic. So Liguria is in the northwest of Italy on the border with France. It's a coastal region. So it starts from the border with Cote Azur, France, and it stretches for 300 km until the border with Tuscany, and it is 25 km inland. So a ton of land squeezed between the sea and the mountain. This is where Liguria's is. A very small region, but with a lot of things to see and a lot of varieties of places and traditions. Also because of how it is geographically made.

Katy

Yeah, it's really one of those little regions tucked away in between Piemonte and Tuscany and Emilia-Romagna. So you've got a lot of different borders happening there as well. But I think it's kind of best known for those seaside villages. And I think probably apart from the Cinque Terre, most people would know Portofino, which is a very fancy place and also Genoa is the main city, which was once a very powerful maritime republic. So the sea is very important. But I think what's really interesting about what you said is that there's also the mountains and I think most people maybe not know about the mountains in Liguria.

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Enrica

Yes, people always know Liguria for its coast. Indeed. This is one of the most beautiful stretch of coast of all the European Union, I would say. Packed with villages and things to see. But Liguria is also the most wooded region in Italy. So we have woods - kilometers and kilometers of woods in the inland, which are almost untouched. So the nature is incredible inside and in the inland. And there are so many wonderful places to see from the historical point of view, naturalistic point of view. So just go inland and you will discover an uncovered and untold place of Italy, really.

Enrica

Exactly.

Katy

It's beautiful. So maybe we just start in Genoa first because that's the capital, right? And that's your hometown. Tell us a little bit about your city.

Enrica

Okay. Genova was, as you said, one of the most important modern republic. And in the medieval ages, let's say, from the 1100s Genova gained a role of a very important merchant city. It was as important as a state. So it was just a city because it had an incredible trading business around the Mediterranean. And what this made Genova a very rich city. And the Genoese the noble Genoese, these merchants were extremely rich and powerful. And all this richness reflects in their houses, in their villas and in their churches, in their family churches. So Genova is packed of wonderful palaces, which indeed they were also awarded by UNESCO because they are incredibly rich outside and inside with frescoes, statues, wonderful paintings. There is such huge richness in the city. And therefore there are churches, so many churches and towers. Our city is packed history, and it's history layers after century after centuries that you can see the development of the powerful of Genova in their buildings and how it is now. So Genova deserves a visit of at least, I would say three or four days to see everything.

Katy

It is. It's a really beautiful city, and it's not just for the palazzi. There's also lots of art museums, and there's a big aquarium there.

Enrica

There is an aquarium, which is one of the biggest in Europe. I really suggest to see that because a really big attraction, but it's worth the visit. And then we have this it is a city, we have also small fishermen village buried inside the city, which is called Bocadasse. So if you

have visited Cinque Terre you have an idea of how Cinque Terre is. If you go to Bocadasse, which is fisherman village close to our city center. This is a very nice beach with all the boats on the beach and the colored small houses. And that's fantastic too.

Katy

Oh, yeah. That's so pretty, Bocadasse. There's so many villages like that - for someone who or for people that are coming from Australia or United States or out of Europe, these are the really most beautiful villages that you imagine these fishing villages. And I don't know, I don't like to say these referred to Disney too often, but if anyone seen the latest little movie called Luca, they've done a pretty good job of showing the style of houses they did.

Enrica

I tell you by a Ligurian 100% local, they did a wonderful job also, because the director is a Genoese person and they pictured Cinque Terre but the main characteristic of the villages that they put in the video, in the movie, you can find them in all the fisherman villages of Liguria. So there are these main topics which are recurring in any coastal landscape of our region. So that's a very great movie. Very well done.

Katy

Yeah. I thought it was lovely and it's not just for kids either, although my kids really liked it. I think it's got a lovely story too. It's kind of a little bit mystical, and I like that. I like that. Now Genoa - there's a lot of eating and drinking, and it's got an amazing food scene there, too, which you're part of, obviously.

Enrica

Yes. I also do food tours in Genova, so that's my speciality and in Genova, well, you can eat pesto. Of course. I think it's one of the most eaten sauce in the world, by the way. But this is our flagship and this is made with pesto. And you can find this everywhere in any restaurant you can find this, especially Trofie with pesto, which is our fresh pasta. It's a small piece of pasta - twirled. Or linguine with pesto, so you can find it everywhere. Then Focaccia, which is our flatbread with evident dimples on the surface, which is shining of oil outside and it's moist inside. So Focaccia is something incredible. And it is a very ancient recipe, too, with the taste of the medieval ages. And you can find for Focaccia everywhere. Any bakery bakes Focaccia many times a day because it is very good hot. And then you can have it all day long. Focaccia is fantastic. And then also, I would say Farinata, which is our chickpea tart, usually baked in wood ovens, because Genova is packed of these ancient eateries called Sciamaddi, where they used to bake food in big copper pans in big wood ovens. And people go there and buy pieces of food like savory tarts Focaccia, Farinata and they eat it underway.

Katy

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So this is street food?

Enrica

Yes. Because indeed, Genova could be considered one of the cream of street food because of its historical origin, because in Genova, in the past there were many people walking around because of the port activities, the merchant activities and so forth. And they had to eat/ to be fed, though they don't have a kitchen where to cook. And so there were a lot of food shops selling food to people walking by in the city.

Katy

That's so interesting. Of course, it makes sense too, doesn't it? Now, tell me, is there a particular one that you're very fond of that does the most excellent Focaccia that we have to stop by?

Enrica

Yes - two.

Enrica

One is Pastificio La Casana, which is in the downtown in a narrow alley of the city center, and the other always in downtown, is called Claretta and both of them make wonderful Focaccia, but they are also slightly different. So if you want to taste both, you can compare and have an idea. It is always Focaccia of course.

Katy

What's the difference? That's really fascinating.

Enrica

Well, in Claretta, Focaccia has rock salt on top, so usually you don't put rock salt and it's a little bit softer and with the lower dimples, while La Casana Focaccia is more greasy. So there is more oil and no rock salt on top. They put just brine, because this is the particular thing of Focaccia is that it is baked with a good quantity of brine on top to keep it moist and make that wonderful salty creaminess inside the dimples. So we could discuss for an hour about Focaccia.

Katy

Absolutely. All right. But maybe let's head. Where should we go north or south from Genoa first and explain what's happening from the north or the south?

Enrica

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Okay. Close to the France border, there is Ventimiglia, which is the last city big city of Liguria. And around Ventimiglia, there is one in Ventimiglia, there is a wonderful park called Villahanbri, where they have astonishing gardens which are fantastic to visit and Ventimiglia has nothing particularly fancy to see the city itself. It has a wonderful inland because we were talking about in land and there are amazing villages, medieval villages in the inland. Of course, the route is not that easy because it is a very slow route going inside the woods to get to these places. But these places are villages on the rock facing the sun, made of all made of stones. And they are principally Apricale, Perinaldo, (which is famous for their artichoke by the way), Pigna, they are all close to each other, so you can visit them the same day if you want Pigna, which also has a thermal site. So they have hot waters where you can bath. And they really deserve a visit because they remain unchanged in the last century because they are really out of the touristic path. So you can still see something very original. And then, of course, if you go inside, we have Bordighera, which is a city very famous at the beginning of the 20th century for the poets and famous painters like Monet. They went there for their vacation. For in Bordighera there are many small villas, and there is a wonderful, as one said, a wonderful light there and also a wonderful weather. That place is also where our Queen, Regina Margherita, used to spend their holidays in the summertime.

Katy

So if it's good enough for a Queen, it should be good enough for us too. Right?

Enrica

Yes. And in the inland of Bordighera, there were. And now, luckily, there are again bitter oranges, which produce this aroma, which is the Bitter Orange battery water, which is extremely tasteful. You can find this aroma in many of our traditional suites like pan dulce or marzipans. It is one of the most precious essence in perfumery because with the Bitter Orange blossom you get the neroli, which is an essence oil, extremely tasteful and expensive. And Queen Margherita loves the place also because she can find with this essence and use it for her daily life and her wardrobe.

Katy

Yeah. It's really interesting that I didn't know that. And I think that area, just even if you stretch back down into France, is very famous for perfumes and perfume making in general. So the French do a very good job of telling everyone about how good their perfumes are. Italy has so many good perfumes too. I didn't know that about the Bitter Orange. They're fascinating.

Enrica

They are fascinating. Also, the harvesting of orange blossoms is incredible. It takes place in May and they harvest all these white blossoms, just letting them fall down from the trees and collect them in this huge piece of white cloth. And then they distill it. But participating to

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the harvesting of the orange blossoms, I would say something of the most dreamy things in the world. And also Maupassant - Guy de Maupassant wrote about that. And it says it's just being in a dream because of this perfume, which is in abbreviating. That's very charming. And also the perfume during May, when the blossoms are at their peak before being harvesting, the perfume - it is said that it arrives on the sea and the sailors. This is something we said in the past. The sailors knew that they were in front of Bordighera because they can smell orange blossom from their boat.

Katy

Oh, my goodness. So romantic. Oh, my goodness. I need to go to this orange blossom festival. That's going right on the list. That's amazing.

Enrica

There is also some Sanremo, which is the villages of flowers, because Sanremo is famous for our music festival, which takes place in February, the most famous music festival in Italy. But it is also known as one of the biggest producer of flower in Italy because there are a lot of green houses. So the climate is incredible in Bordighera, it's so warm and temperate that everything smelling very well in that area.

Katy

That sounds beautiful. Oh, my goodness. I was sort of wondering about because I do love France, but not as much as Italy. But like this road trip, there's definitely a road trip that's got to be done from the south of France along to Liguria. But let's keep going along the coast.

Enrica

What else can we see from Sanremo to Diano Marina, which is 20 km eastward. We can visit Liguria. We can visit the special Liguria by bike because there is a wonderful cycling path which was built on the old railway track. And it is amazing because you have kilometers of path just devoted to cycling straight on the sea. There are no cars, there are bars, restaurants, hotels. And it is incredible if someone wants to enjoy the place with the bicycle, that's incredible, because in Liguria we had a railway going through the coast, just on the seaside. And it was one of the first railway built in Italy. It was built in the middle of the 1900s, and it was conceived to connect all those villages that in the past could be reached just by sea because the coast is extremely rocky and it was very difficult to connect places on the coast. And so they made this railway piercing the mountains. Then the railway was too small for the traffic, which increased, so they decided to move it inland. And the old railway, let's say all the railway of the West Liguria is moved inland, so the ancient one remains empty. And now they are making this step by step. They are enlarging the cycling path to make it enjoyable in this different way, which is amazing because you are right on the sea and you can get from one village to the other in this way.

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Katy

Where does it start?

Enrica

It starts in San Remo and now it goes up to Diano Marina, but they are working on doing the other leg from Diano Marina to Albenga, to even stretching on the Easter part. So this is under construction.

Katy

It sounds wonderful. Amazing. I think the one really amazing thing about Liguria, especially if people are not keen on driving, is actually very well connected by train. All those towns along the coast there. I think sometimes people think if they want to go a little bit off the beaten path easily, they need to get a car. But I think in the case of Liguria, you can reach quite some towns by train.

Enrica

Yes, this is true in the east. Definitely true. And in the Western part now it's always accessible by train. But not all the villages has a train station anymore, but yes, of course, definitely train is the best way to travel Liguria without a car. If you want to see the coast, if you want to visit the inland, you need a car because there is no connection as well.

Katy

Okay, well, that's good to know. Okay, what's next? Tell me more. Tell me more.

Enrica

We have Imperia. Imperia is the second largest city after Ventimiglia, and it is the capital of Extra Virgin Olive. Oil. So in the inland of interior, we have olive groves. They make tons and tons of Extra Virgin olive oil with the olive called Taggiasca olive. And our oil is a DOP so it is protected by the European Community as a product of origin. And our oil is incredible. Of course, I have to say that, but compared to the other Italian oil, Extra Virgin Olive Oil, it is more mild and it has taste somehow, of artichoke and flowers. I think it is perfect for seasoning, but also for cooking, because it's not so strong in flavor. And indeed, this is one of the main ingredients of Ligurian cuisine, and this is one of the elements that makes Ligurian cuisine one of the best Mediterranean diet, because we have this ingredient, which is extremely healthy and so Imperia, is the capital of the oil. There is also a Museum of extra Virginia oil in the area now.

Katy

Interestingly, because normally when you head north in Italy, there's a lot of butter and dairy and a different type, but in Liguria, it's more olive oil focused. Right?

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Enrica

Definitely. We have no butter in our cuisine. Butter was something that people use for really special occasions because it was imported by the northern regions because we don't have this is something particular of Liguria. We don't have enough space to farm cows because we don't have fields. So the production of milk and all the dairies is very limited. We don't have a huge cheese production. We don't have milk that much. We don't have butter. We produced it in the past in a very small amount, and it was reserved for special occasions, whilst the extra virgin olive oil was available for everybody and for all the peasants, because there were huge olive groves in our inland.

Katy

Yeah, it's amazing. I think this is so important for us all to understand. We are used to getting, you know, I went to the supermarket today and there were some grapes there and I was thinking, Hang on a minute. It's spring. Why are we having grapes? Because grapes you normally get in late summer and autumn. And then I looked at the packet and it says Product of United States. It's interesting because no, like Italians don't think that way. If you don't have butter or you don't have cows, you don't have butter, so you have something else. And I just love that about it. It's just so localized and seasonal - that it can only be healthy. I have to say.

Enrica

Of course, we're talking about traditions because of course, now we can have everything as you have in our supermarkets. But our cuisine, of course, developed in the centuries and we inherited from our ancestors a way of eating which did not imply butter. So we use butter very few. But we use Extra Virgin Oil. I use one bottle of oil per week. I would say less than a week, so I use it everywhere.

Katy

Okay, well, we understand the olive oil is very important in Imperia. So it's now we're keeping going down the coast. We've got a long way to go.

Enrica

Yes. After Imperia, we have to visit Cervo. It's a medieval village hanging over the sea. It has a huge Baroque Church with these small houses packed close to it. And it has a wonderful feel. And most of all, in Cervo, there is my family house. Not only because it is my family house from more than a century, but it is also an incredible place, one of the most beautiful towns in Italy. So really deserving a visit and you can get there by car, but to get to the Church and to the castle, you have to climb because there are just stairs because it is very steep.

Katy

Okay.

Enrica

But it's amazing. And also Cervo is my home base where I have to organize food experiences in the area. Cervo is the hub, because I can organize cooking classes there. And then we can move to visit cheesemakers, wine makers, olive oil makers. We have many wonderful food attractions in there. Also, because close to Cervo, there is Albenga and the island of Albenga. Albenga has a plain around. And this is the only plain of Liguria. So there is the place where most vegetables are produced. And also there are vineyards going inland.

Enrica

So there is a so called wine route, which leads from Albenga to Pieve di Teco, which is a wonderful village on the mountain. And there is this wine route where there are winemakers making Pigato, which is one of the best white wine in Liguria and Ormeasco di Pornassio which is a red wine. So that is winemaking area and also cheese making area, because then you can climb up mountains and you get to the so called, La_Brigue which is a region bordering with France. And that is a region of shepherds.

Enrica

They farm sheep, this famous variety of sheep called Pecora Brigasca and they make wonderful cheese with tomatoes - Toma di Pecora Brigasca. And it's amazing one thing to say, because it's very interesting. They develop a special kind of cuisine called the Cucina Bianca - white cuisine, because that kind of cuisine is just made with ingredients white.

Katy

Wow.

Enrica

So they have cheese, potatoes, cauliflower, leeks, pasta. So all the ingredients of this chat parts cuisine are white. And so that is the area Mendatica, Pieve di Teco - that is the area of the white cuisine. If you visit the area, look for that, because that is something really special.

Katy

Yeah. So interesting. I don't know how the kids go. What we're like is that "eat your vegetables" and "eat your greens". They go, "no, I'm going to eat cucina bianca".

Enrica

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This is how my son wants to be fed. Just white things.

Katy

So interesting. Keep going. Keep going. Tell us more.

Enrica

You want to know more? OK I have more. Then we move on the east, and we have the region of Finaly Ligure. And there we have Finaly and Finalborgo, especially - Finalborgo is an ideal town like you can imagine of any fairytale, because there is the castle with the walls, with the towers, with the bridge so perfectly kept as in the medieval ages. Finalborgo wonderful. And in the finale, and it's inland is the capital of rock climbing in Europe because the land is made of deep cliffs in the woods and so there are many climbing paths here and there. There are also caves, hidden villages that's an uncontaminated area accessible mainly hiking or climbing, if you want to go to the hills. And it's fantastic from the naturalistic point of view, from the sporting point of view, you can also do mountain bike, hiking, climbing and all these outdoor activities. And you can go on the website of outdoorfinaleligure.com. And there you have an idea of what you can do there. And if you want to sleep in the area, I suggest Borgio Verezzi which is a small tiny village on the mountains, but just on the seas.

Enrica

And Borgio Verezzi, one of the best views for me of all the Ligurian Gulf. And it's very nice.

Katy

That's amazing because it's so, so, so pretty. So it must be very special, that's special.

Enrica

And below Borgio Verezzi, close to Finale there is another very nice fisherman village resort called Noli, quite different from the Cinque Terre landscape, because Cinque Terre are on the cliff, on the sea, while Noli has one of the few sand beaches in Liguria. So the bay is very smooth. And there is this clear crystal water like in Caribbean, let's say, being at the water of Noli, they built this so called Nemo's garden, which are greenhouses underwater where they farm vegetables. And this is, I think, the only one project of this kind in the world, and you can visit it. So you can go with snorkeling and visit these underwater greenhouses where they indeed grow everything from fruits to vegetables to basil. And it's an experiment very interesting because they farm all these products with no pollution, no bacteria, no need of pesticides and anything. And everything is under the water.

Katy

Oh, my goodness. And completely organic, obviously.

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Enrica

Completely. Of course.

Katy

I can't even imagine it sounds fascinating. I've got to go check it out for myself. Wow.

Enrica

The Nemo's garden - the name is Nemo's Garden. Okay, we are close to Genoa, so we are almost going to cross Geneva but I have just mentioned for those who are passionate of geology and also hiking and walking in the mountains we have in the back of Arenzano. Arenzano is a big small city close to Genova. In the back there is the Beigua UNESCO Geopark and it was awarded by UNESCO as a site important from the geology point of view because of its stones and the way it is made of and also the nature there is fantastic. And you have incredible landscapes, because when you hike in the mountains, you can see the sea. So it's wonderful. And in this respect I have to mention one important thing. There is a route which links all the mountain bridges of Liguria, which is called Alta Via dei Monti Liguri. And that is really fantastic path on top of the Ligurian mountains, which are the Maritime Alps going from Ventimiglia to the Tuscany borders. But on top and you can go from one mountains to the other with this line on the bridges of the mountains. And it's incredible for those who like trekking and so sleeping in small refuges here and there - that's another way of enjoying our region because you can see the woods but also breathtaking landscapes on the sea and on the both sides, so you can see one side and being on the bridges you can see also Piedmont, Lombardi, Emilia Romagna sites. That's a wonderful journey.

Katy

Wow you're showing us so much passion for your land. And I'm telling you I knew Liguria is special, but I'm learning so much from you, Enrica - it's amazing. Okay, let's continue into Liguria.

Enrica

Okay, then we jump Genova, which is roughly in the middle and then we have the last leg, which is the East Coast and there we have close to Genova. We have Golfo Paradiso, Paradise, Gulf, and in Golfo Paradiso, there are few villages deserving a visit which are Camogli. Camogli is fantastic similar to Cinque Terre, I would say, because the characteristics are almost the same. A lot of colored houses straight on the sea with a small fisherman port, fisherman, harbor and Camogli is so easy to reach by train from Genova, from Cinque Terre, but it is a visit and it is famous jointly with Recco, which is a small village before Camogli. Not nice as Camogli because it is more modern by the way. They are famous for the focaccia formaggio - our cheese pie. La focaccia formaggio de Recco I think is one of the that's an IGP product. It is protected also by the European Union because as a special product of our region, and it is a pie made of two thin layer of dough packed with cheese. This melting

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cheese called crescenza, produced in the inland of Recco and Camogli, you can eat the original one just in a few restaurants there in Recco and in Camogli there is a wonderful Focacceria called Revello, which is just on the promenade on Camogli Promenade, where they make this wonderful focaccia formaggio. But you can taste it also elsewhere in Liguria because this is a flag ship of our cuisine with the focaccia bread and the Golfo Paradiso can be visited by train, of course, but also with the ferry boat. And this is interesting because from Camogli you have a ferry boat which makes small stops on the coast and let people go down in places which could not be reached unless hiking from the top downward and up like Punta Chiappa and San Fruttuoso. San Fruttuoso is a tiny tiny beach in between in the Portofino Mountain, hidden by all sides but just a few lengths of sea. And on the beach there is this Abbey - ancient Abbey, which was indeed a religious famous hub in the medieval ages. And you can get to some tours just by boat or hiking. This is precious. And there are few restaurants, of course, on the beach, because there is just a beach. And if you want, you can also sleep inside the Abbey. There is a flat and the Italian organization jointly with Airbnb and another operator, which I don't remember. Well, they let you rent this apartment for a few days and there you are in very expedited place because during the day you can have some tourists visiting it with the boats. But during the night there is nobody. It's completely for you the night and the early morning. So it's fantastic. Wonderful.

Katy

I've got to tell everyone, you just get a little bit emotional because I love this area. It is called the Golfo Paradiso for a reason. It is absolutely stunning. And Camogli was one place where I just went "I'm coming back here definitely for sure, one day. And San Fruttuoso, honestly, it's beautiful and not that many people go there.

Enrica

It's fantastic. And San Fruttuoso, is in the Portofino Mountain. Portofino Mountain is a park, so it's a protected area, not only the mountain but also the marine area in front of Portofino. And that is being a marine area protected. There is a huge variety of fishes, corals in downwater, and indeed there snorkeling is fantastic. And in front of San Fruttuoso for those who love snorkling, there is a huge statue of Christ in the water. Il Cristo degli Abissi it is called Christ of the Abyss, which you can visit snorkeling there, but also just snorkeling for see the vegetation is that vegetation that underwater. Well, anyway, to look at the landscape there, it's fantastic. And Portofino also is fantastic for hiking, because there are these paths on the sea, among the olive groves, lemon groves, pines from here and there you can see the coast from here and there you can see the sea. That's amazing walking. There is amazing and that's really family friendly. There are lots of paths that are very easy to make just for a couple of hours to have an idea just to walk and feel the flavors of Liguria. That is very flavory place, I would say that's one of my best smelling memories ever in the Portofino Mountain?

Katy

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Goodness. It's incredibly beautiful. And I want all these super yachts park there in the summer because it is absolutely stunning. Portofino itself is very tiny as well, isn't it? So it's not somewhere where it's easy to find accommodation or anything like that, unless you're wanting to pay thousands of dollars enough.

Enrica

No, I would say inaccessible to normal people. That's one of the most luxury resorts in the world. So we have the richest people in the world coming to stay in Portofino or to stay with their maxi yacht in the Portofino harbour. And if I have to suggest when to visit Portofino with the village of Portofino. Visit them in low season. So in October and in the Fall and winter here, the weather is fine. It's wonderful anyway. It's never cold. The sun days are many, though it's winter and those places really recover their authenticity when the mass tourists is away and Portofino is one of them. So you can see the harbour. You can see the houses because you don't have this huge maxi yacht covering your view with their sparkling lights. This is the problem of our beautiful places that they are really packed with the tourists.

Katy

I have to say we actually drove to Portofino because we had little kids, which was a little bit of, like challenging, you can imagine. But you can actually walk there from Santa Margherita Ligure, which is just down the road there. And it's a beautiful walk actually. So I've done that too.

Enrica

Wonderful walk because the Paraggi Bay and the walk from Santa Margarita to Portofino on the coast is amazing. I think that Paraggi has the best water in the world. The color of Paraggi water is incredible. This is emerald, it's fantastic, fantastic. It's a really deserving visit. And the walk, if it is in low season, you will enjoy it some more.

Katy

Yeah, exactly. It's very beautiful, stunning.

Enrica

And you can visit the Parco also, as I said, well, snorkelling, of course, down underwater. But you can also do some kayaking. For example, they organize kayak trips along the coast for - even for beginners. And that's a very nice way to enjoy the coast. So you don't have cars and pollution and people because you are just on the sea. There are good guides. They have a site called Outdoor Portofino and they offer all these activities, sporting activities in the surrounding of Portofino. I think this is a nice way to enjoy that portion of the Liguria without being too much tourist around you. And then we have the last leg, I will say, which is before Cinque Terre, which is the Golfo del Tigullio also Santa Margherita Ligure which is close to

Portofino, is very nice too. And it's in the center of Golfo di Tigullio. Santa Margherita is a small town, no more fisherman village, but a town. But they are nice shops, really nice shops. So if you want to do some shopping, that's the place. And also there are wonderful food shops here and there. There is this amazing food shop called Seghezzo, which is I think, unique in Italy, of course, unique in Liguria. They have everything. From coffees, to chocolates to sauces, to marmalades, to fruits, to candies, candied fruits, to biscuits, everything. So if you're a foodie, you have to go to Santa Margarita and visit Seghezzo.

Katy

It's true. I think I was in there for 2 hours.

Enrica

You can stay longer! Indeed they have a coffee counter because you have to take a break, take a coffee and then start again.

Katy

It's an Alladin's cave for foodies. It really is - there's so many things in there my little eyes were popping out of my head. I loved it.

Enrica

And then we have two other cities worth a visit. Chiavari. Chiavari is a town by itself. They have also a court. So it's a town small town with a wonderful portio system and wonderful shops. It's a very live town, very human side. It is not really on the sea because it has not a beach. It's very weird and it's very nice. They have also, I think the last Sunday each month they have a wonderful antique market on Sunday and you can find wonderful antiques. And it's a free market, antique market. And also the food is fantastic in Chiavari. Under the porticos, there are ancient pastry shops, ancient eateries. The shops are - they've preserve many old shops, as they were like in Genova, because also in Genova, there are a lot of old shops which have more than a century and are managed by the same family since generation and generation. And in Chiavari too. This is a speciality of Ligurian, probably also because of the characters of Ligurian, which are very close and they tend to do their business in the family. Keep family business. But they preserve also these places which now are authentic jewels in this continuistic area. So you deserve a visit of all the shops, Boutique historique if you find it online. Boutique historique is the name of this small historical shops in Chiavari and in Genoa. We have Sestri Levante along the coast always. Sestri Levante is the famous for its bay, Baia del Silenzio. Sestri Levante has a special geography and it has this small promontory just in the middle of the city. And so it has two bays. One of them is so close, it's almost like a lake, which is -the water there is always still. There is no cars because you can get there just walking. There are all these houses, fisherman houses there. It's amazing. The Silent Bay. And indeed it is very silent. And there is a beach. So it's a sandy beach with all the boats on the sea. So it's amazing. It's very nice also. And the shops in Sestri Levante very nice.

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Katy

Yeah, it's really lovely. We spent a day there and I was thinking, oh, my goodness, I'm going to come back here because it's got that beautiful, relaxed feeling because there are no cars aren't in that pedestrian area, and it's all got like stone walkways. And it's just a very nice place. I highly recommend it.

Enrica

And the inland of Chiavari and Sestri Levante is amazing too. There is this National Park - Parco dell'Aveto, and that is a National Park where you can, of course, do a lot of trekking, hiking. And there are lots of produce and producers very interesting in that area. They produce hazelnuts, cheeses, especially the cheese made with this kind of cow called the Cabannina. So the cheese making is very good there. They have huge production of chestnuts, all the Liguria inland is full of chestnut trees and chestnuts are very popular. And it was especially in the past, a very popular food because it was cheap at everybody's disposal. And many Ligurians were saved by famine periods, thanks to chestnuts. And we have many recipes with chestnuts so that's quite popular ingredients and also potatoes. The mountain potatoes. Our potatoes in the mountains are extremely tasty. They taste actually, they have a taste, they have a smell, which is incredible because you think that potatoe is just texture, but no, they have also a taste, their flavor. So in Parco Aveto, there is a nice activity to do, which is wild horse watching, because in the park there are around 80 or 90 wild horses, which is something very strange because usually horses are in the farm, but no here in park of the Aveto, there are these wild horses which are so beautiful because they are big, shining. They are shining. They are so healthy and powerful and pride. And you can watch them because there are these organizations which take care of them, of course, because it's not easy to take care of wild animals in these days, and you can have a sightseeing and go to visit them with a guide. And the guy who takes care of that has a website called I Cavalli Selvaggi dell'Aveto. That's a very nice way to appreciate the territory, of course, and the nature. And these horses are amazing to see.

Katy

We haven't even gone really that close to the Cinque Terre now. And how many beautiful places have you told us about? It's amazing. I think we're going to have to get you back on the show to tell us so much more about Liguria, because you're really reminding me what I did absolutely love about this region. And for some, I don't understand why people don't venture a little further into there because as you've just shown us, there's so many, many places to go and experiences to have from nature and culture and food and all the things that we really love about Italy. Amazing.

Enrica

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I think this is also the confirmation of our region because it is divided into valleys running from the mountains to the sea. And each valley, which are very narrow vallies, develop its own environment, culture, tradition. It suffer different historical events. So it's a mosaic. We have many different worlds in the same region.

Katy

It's amazing what a beautiful part of the world that you live in. And I know we've only scratched the surface. You've given us a very quick introduction to your region today, and I've no doubt everyone listening would love to find out some more about how they can explore beyond the Cinque Terre. How can they stay in touch with you and your work and all the delicious food that you cook?

Enrica

They can get in touch with me on my website. It's asmallkitcheningenoa.com. It's in English, of course, and in Italian as well. And I share recipes and the food guides of Liguria. So you can also find foodie tips for travelers and there you can also find my cooking classes and food tours and experiences I offer. And also you can follow me on my food journeys and everyday food stories on Instagram. Always [asmallkitcheningenoa](http://asmallkitcheningenoa.com).

Katy

Yeah, I highly recommend that you do follow Enrica on [asmallkitcheningenoa](http://asmallkitcheningenoa.com), but maybe not if you're hungry because she does wonderful food photography and everything just looks so delicious. And what I love about it is it's really focused on the local produce in Liguria and those local dishes that make it so special. So if you don't mind and Enrica, we'd love to have you back on the show. But I'm so happy that you joined us today. Grazie Mille.

Enrica

Grazie Katy. Ciao

Katy

Are you tempted by Liguria? Honestly it is such a beautiful region. And while we've spent quite some time there, I learned so much from Enrica and am simply pining for the orange blossom festival and all the tastes, places and experiences she mentioned. I do love freshly baked focaccia dont you? And how about those wild horses? What a beautiful sight they must be. It is definitely worth lingering a little longer in Liguria than simply a quick trip to the Cinque Terre. You might very well fall in love with its lesser known charming towns, just as we have.

Enrica shared so many great ideas and of course, as always we've put all the information she mentioned into the show notes for you as well as how to follow A Small Kitchen in Genoa at

untolditaly.com/106 I will definitely be paying her a visit when we are next in Liguria. I think I'd like to do a focaccia tasting tour with her - can you tell I am a bit obsessed by that bread?!

Thanks for your ongoing support of Untold Italy. We truly appreciate all of you, our listeners joining us from around the world. I recently met some of you at an event in my home town here in Melbourne Australia and it was quite clear to me, we're a special bunch of kind and generous people connected by a love of all things Italian.

So we'd love it if you helped spread the word so we can reach more Italy loving travelers ust like you. And the best way you can do this is by leaving us a 5 star rating or review on your favorite podcast app or forwarding this episode onto a friend who also loves colorful towns, delightful local customs and the magic of regional Italy.

That's all for today, next week we're taking a trip to Sicily - and you know how much that excites me, but until then it's... "ciao for now"