

A person in a pink shirt and white helmet is climbing a rock face. The background is a deep blue sea with sunlight reflecting off the water. The text is overlaid on the left side of the image.

LOANO, PIETRA LIGURE, FINALE LIGURE and the OUTDOOR RIVIERA

.....
a natural arena for every sport



Provincia di
savona

LOANO, PIETRA LIGURE, FINALE LIGURE and the OUTDOOR RIVIERA

This portion of Liguria with extraordinary landscapes, inspiring views and scenarios gives events and functions a unique atmosphere of fascination.

An inland area rich in nature and culture and a coast where steep cliffs alternate to large sandy beaches offer unique opportunities of sports.

From Capo Vado to Capo Santo Spirito, the changing blue of the sea soaks up and melts into the dark green of the olive and pine trees. Prehistoric man lived here, Princes and Marquises made it wonderful and nowadays, this portion of land has chosen to favour tourists.

Each town has a table as synopsis of value in terms of Tourism.
Marks are given for Nature, Art and Family to synthesize what is on offer.



Outdoors/Nature

The marks are based on natural resources and landscape, including sports facilities and excursions. In other words what goes to make an "active holiday"



Art

Marks are based on relevant resources concerning Art and History, including dedicated itinerary (museums, monuments, etc.)



Family

Marks are based on services oriented for families, including accommodation and attractions suitable for children and grown-ups.

SCENARIOS OF LIGHT



**NATURE
TO TASTE**



A young girl in a blue and green patterned bikini is captured mid-jump from a white platform into the turquoise sea. Below her, another person is splashing in the water, their legs and arms visible above the surface. The background features a sandy beach with many people, a hillside with buildings, and a clear blue sky with scattered white clouds. The text "A CHEERFUL DIVE" is overlaid in a bold, teal font on the left side of the image.

A CHEERFUL DIVE



**A NOTCH
ABOVE THE REST**



BERGEGGI

Sea and land

The village of Bergeggi, located on the slopes of Monte Sant'Elena and founded by Pre-roman Ligurian tribes, dominates the stretch of coast from Capo Vado to Punta Maiolo.

The village where houses have typical terrace roofs is surrounded by chestnut, olive trees and vineyards and narrow lanes which lead to the beach. A holiday resort with a lot to offer ranging from nature to culture. On the steep tip of Capo Maiolo, overhanging the sea, the X Century Torre d'Ere built to keep pirates at bay is a view to behold. In the parish church of San Martino Vescovo (XVIII Century) a wooden polychrome Cross by Maragliano can be admired.



The Isle of Bergeggi

The beautiful isle of Bergeggi, a rock covered in green vegetation, is directly in front of the promontory. First the Romans lived here, then it became the dwelling of monks from the IV to X Centuries. Today the ruins of two churches and a medieval tower are still visible. In 1985 the Riserva Naturale Regionale was created to protect an environment made of lime cliffs and small beaches stretching from Bergeggi to Spotorno which includes the rock with its 53 m above the sea level but less than 300m from the shore. The Campanula Sabatia, a plant which grows only in western Liguria, thrives here. Also the Euforbia arborea, whose leaves fall in summer to appear again in winter, lives here.

A cave and the train cavern

Though its main access is from the sea a cave is found in the lime cliff and is also connected to the road above by a narrow and long path. Penetrated by the sea it cre-

ates fascinating iridescences in a vast space which was inhabited by Neolithic man. A fact, proven by evidence found in 1967.

The Grotta del Treno – train cavern – is an over 400m long cave discovered in 1870 when the train tunnel of Bergeggi was being built. Recent works have made it possible to visit a part of the complex tunnel system.

Let's fly among sports

Bergeggi is ideal for practicing all sorts of sports in perfect harmony with nature, e.g. hang and para gliding, beach volley, canoeing, windsurfing and diving. There are also excellent opportunities for those who enjoy trekking. In the surrounding hills visitors can reach the forts of San Giacomo (1757) and San Sebastiano (1889) built to protect the bay. They can also take a walk in the Sughereta Natte, the largest expanse of cork trees in western Liguria. They can also reach Fort Sant'Elena and enjoy a breathtaking view.

Useful info

Visite guidate e itinerari Comune di Bergeggi – Guided visits and itinerary Town Hall of Bergeggi
Via De Mari, 28/d
17028 Bergeggi
Tel. 019 257901

www.comune.bergeggi.sv.it

Touristic Offer

■■■■■ Outdoors/Nature

■ ■ ■ ■ ■ Art

■■■ ■ ■ Family







VARIGOTTI

Colours on the sea

The wonderful village of Varigotti fascinates with its houses on the sea shore, painted in typically Ligurian warm colours. Varicottis, founded as civitas on the sea, was destroyed by the Longobards in 643. The village, as we know it now, is the result of XIV Century development. In the past its harbour ensured Varigotti's prosperity until the Genoese filled it. Several writers and painters celebrated Varigotti in the XX Century, inspired by its colours and unspoiled nature. Hemingway, Pavese and Gina Lagorio have written about it thus making the fascination of its narrow lanes immortal.

A crystal clear sea

Visitors to this area can enjoy the green and crystal clear sea of the Malpasso and Baia dei Saraceni - Bay of Saracens- after the cliffs of Capo Noli. The promontory of Punta Crena offers a quiet little beach. A steep path leads to the ruins of the castle and watch tower of the Del Carretto family from where views of the surrounding transparent sea can be enjoyed. The western seashore hosts good quality privately organized beaches.

Walks fragrant of aromatic herbs

Pleasant paths in Mediterranean maquis allow the exploration of the hills at the back of the village. Here rosemary bushes, oregano and thyme inebriate the passers-by with their scents and yellow broom flowers make prisoners out of them.

North of the Aurelia road, an easy path through olive groves and maritime pine trees leads to the small church of San Lorenzo Vecchio with its small steeple overhanging the sea underneath.



Touristic Offer

- ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ Outdoors/Nature
- ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ Art
- ☒ ☒ ☒ ☐ ☐ ☐ Family



FINALE LIGURE

Borderland

Finale, from Ad Fines, was once the border between the Liguri Sabatii and the Liguri Ingauni, then in the middle Ages between the Aleramic and Arduinic Marches. It enjoyed great prosperity under the rule of the marquises of the Del Carretto family in the XIII Century. Finale's links with the Sforza family, who ruled Milan, ensured a lively cultural and political life, which lasted even when Finale became part of the crown of Spain. Its economic prosperity came to an end because of Genoa, an old enemy, which conquered Finale in 1748.



Three towns in one

Three urban areas form Finale. Finalpia is on the sea and was built round the Benedictine abbey of Santa Maria di Pia, where one of the most important examples of XIII Century Ligurian church steeple still stands. The friars run a well known workshop, where they produce highly appreciated honey and wax products thanks to the bee hives they look after. The buildings and houses of Finalpia have preserved their original XVI Century architecture.

Finalmarina is along the coast and has a wide and beautiful promenade flanked by palm trees. In its centre, it is possible to visit the parish church of San Giovanni Battista which is one of the finest Baroque buildings in Liguria and has two steeples at either sides of the façade. The arch of triumph dedicated to Marguerite of Spain is part of the heritage of the Spanish rule. It was built in 1666 when the princess passed through Finale on her way to Vienna

where she would marry the emperor.

The arch of Carlo Alberto, built in 1836, celebrates the transit of the king. Finalborgo, founded in the XII Century by the marquises of the Del Carretto family, is still evidence, with elegant palazzos and churches, of the prosperity of the ancient capital of the marquisate, over a period of time which spans from the XV to XVIII Centuries. Its historical centre is one of the most beautifully preserved in Liguria.

One of the Most Beautiful Villages in Italy

Visitors enter Finalborgo through the Porta Testa, with a typical clock tower. After traditional and modern shops, they reach the central Piazza Garibaldi. If they turn right, they can visit the church of San Biagio, which will surprise them because of the contrast between the half finished façade and the richness and opulence of

its interior decorations. An octagonal late gothic steeple is part of the defensive walls. Nearby is the Porta Reale, with the coats of arm of the Del Carretto family. If visitors return to Piazza Garibaldi, they can go through the piazza del Tribunale with its imposing XV Century palazzo. From here it is possible to continue towards the monumental area of Santa Caterina whose premises – once a XIV Century convent and XV Century cloisters - have been given a new lease on life thanks to a clever restoration work. They host the Museo Archeologico del Finale as well exhibitions and important events.

Castles and princesses

The fort of Castellfranco in Finalmarina strategically dominates the town and controls the length of coast from the Caprazoppa to Capo San Donato. The original structure was built

by the Republic of Genoa in the XIV Century. However, it underwent several modifications throughout the centuries, in particular under the Spanish rule. Nowadays it is property of the Town Hall. In occasion of the Castello Incantato – Enchanted Castle – and other events it comes back to life. In Finalborgo, the Strada Berretta or Strada della Regina begins. It was opened in 1666 when the Infanta of Spain happened to pass through the town and was conceived to link Finale to Milan. Up along old trails, the Castel San Giovanni, high up in a commanding position, still stands. Its layout is medieval with Spanish interventions. The stronghold is populated by people in medieval costumes when historical events, such as the Dinô da Nùxe, are re-enacted. Further up are located the ruins of Castel Gavone, a military and residential structure. Its Lombard style architecture bears testimony of the links between the Del Carretto and Sforza families. The Torre del Diamante, so called because of its square stone ashlar cover-work, still proudly stands.

The Marina and beaches

The marina of the Capo San Donato bay welcomes those who like the sea and its activities. In Finale, they find the natural resources and facilities to make their stay in the area ideal, should they decide to enjoy the sun and beach or sports and fun. There are several public beaches with facilities thought out for children as well as places where the requirements of people of all ages can be met.

Useful Info

Museo Archeologico del Finale
Archaeological Museum of Finale
Chiostri di S. Caterina
Finalborgo 17024 Finale Ligure
Tel. 019 690020

www.museoarcheofinale.it
info@museoarcheofinale.it

Touristic Offer

■■■■■ Outdoors/Nature

■■■■■ Art

■■■■■ Family





THE AREA OF FINALE

A mosaic of landscapes

The inland area between the Capo Noli and Caprazoppa, i.e. the plateau of Manie, the val Ponci and the villages of Orco Feglino and Calice Ligure, is unique in Liguria. In a few kilometres, visitors get from wide beaches to unspoilt nature, taking in their stride high cliffs, Roman bridges, villages full of art and history, a plateau with several caves and a Mediterranean maquis rich in animals and plants. A variety of environments which cannot fail to satisfy those who seek outdoors activities as well as divers, climbers, cyclists and excursionists.



Inland of Finale

Two churches well worth a visit are in Perti, just inland of Finalborgo. The churches of Sant'Eusebio and the XV Century church of Nostra Signora di Loreto with its distinctive five steeples. Otherwise, further up the hill, it is possible to visit the villages of Calice Ligure and Rialto. This is the area where the Lumassina, Vermentino and Nostralino wines are produced. In Calice, the parish church, the Oratory and the small church of Santa Libera can be admired. Also here is the Museo d'Arte Contemporanea Casa del Console – Modern Art Museum – hosting a part of a collection whose bulk is dedicated to the memory of the Remo Pastori, an art gallery manager from Turin. In Rialto, it is possible to visit a small Museo della Civiltà Contadina – Museum of Traditional Farming Activities. An interesting and pleasant path leads from Calice to the hamlet of Carbuta. From here, Feglino can be reached, going up

towards Orco in the direction of the Manie plateau.

Alternatively the Pian dei Corsi forest, with a shelter house, can also be reached up to the Colle del Melogno 1,000m high.

Rural villages

At the back of Finale, on the hillside, there are many villages immersed in green hills and surrounded by white cliffs. Feglino, in the valley of the Aquila River, still has terraced houses built round the church of San Lorenzo. From the church close of San Lorenzino in Orco, on the watershed, a remarkable view of the unspoilt and quiet val Cornei can be enjoyed. Boragni is an ancient rural hamlet with a picturesque vault-covered street. Magnone, Vezzi Portio and Voze still have Mediterranean houses surrounded by terraces with vineyards.

The Manie Plateau

An unspoilt natural environment with luscious plants often endemic to the place. It can be reached by car, on foot or by bike paths cut through the Mediterranean maquis, woodlands, vegetables gardens and vineyards. Local restaurants offer tasty traditional dishes which can be washed down with locally produced wines. In the past, the area was a lagoon. Shells started forming sediments on its bottom thus producing a pinkish limestone rock which nowadays is called Pietra di Finale. Time and weather have shaped it forming caverns, caves and valleys. Several caves still bear testimony of the presence of prehistoric man. The Arma delle Manie preserves a special atmosphere. It is a wide cave just few steps away from the fork of the paths leading to Spotorno and Varigotti.

Roman Bridges

From Calvisio, it is possible to reach the Val Ponci, (Vallis Pontium). Romans built the five bridges along the via Julia Augusta road. A pleasant walk leads to the Ponte delle Fate, with an overhanging cave of the same name, the almost intact Ponte delle Voze, the half buried Ponte dell'Acqua and a pillar which is all that is left of the Ponte Magnone. Near the Ciappa del Sale, a flat stone with interesting rock inscriptions can be admired.

Rock climbing and mountain bike cycling

The Finalese – area of Finale – is perfect for outdoor activities. Pleasant and easy walks along scenic paths, or breathtaking mountain bike cycling and rock climbing for thrill-seekers are all possible here.

All year round, climbers from all over Europe come to the rock of Corno, also popular in winter as it is sheltered from northern winds, to the rock of Uccelli near Vezzi Portio and the cliff known as the Bastionata di Boragni.

Finalborgo is the starting point for the rocks of Perti, Carpanea and dell'Orera, the Bric Pianarella, Mount Cucco and the Bric Spaventaggi.

The Manie Plateau hosts the 24 h of Finale Mountain Bike Cup, a sport event of European relevance.

Useful Info

Museo della Civiltà Contadina
Museum of Traditional Farming Activities
Via Benso, Loc. Chiesa
17020 Rialto
Tel. 019 65114

Casa del Console Contemporary
Art Museum – Museum of Modern Art Casa del Console
Via Roma, 61
17020 Calice Ligure
Tel. 019 65433

info@comune.calice-ligure.sv.it
www.comune.calice-ligure.sv.it

Museo delle Api – Bee Museum
presso parrocchia di San Giorgio
17028 Vezzi Portio
visits must be booked in advance
Tel. 019 7428000

Touristic Offer

Outdoors/Nature

Art

Family





ALTA VAL BORMIDA

A valley to enjoy

In the province of Savona the mountains can be reached from the sea by simply driving in a very short distance through places full of atmosphere. Up the Colle del Melogno, bend after bend, it is possible to reach an altitude of 1,000m and enjoy its typical vegetation, open landscape, picturesque villages and hamlets. This is where the Alta Val Bormida begins. It includes the Bormida di Millesimo, one of the three streams forming the tributary to the Po River, and also the alpine part of the Riviera delle Palme. The dukes of Savoy and the Marquises of Monferrato played an important role in its history. The local dialects, food and architecture remind visitors that this side of the mountains leads to the Po River plain.



Typical products

Food has always been part of a tradition in perfect harmony with the geographical position of the territory half way between Liguria and Piedmont. Wild mushrooms, boleti especially, are the real protagonists of the local delicacies, in particular in the area of Calizzano and Bardineto, where dedicated events are held every year. Millesimo is well known for its truffles, also celebrated during a special event in autumn, as well as for the production of salami and sausages. Millesimini, chocolate delicacies with a rum filling, are certainly worth trying. As well as Tirotti, Sciacarotti and Fazzini, dainty variations of a bread based dish. The castagna essiccata nei tecci di Calizzano e Murialdo – naturally dried chestnuts – are Slow Food presidia. Chestnuts, once considered the “bread of the poor”, are now used in biscuits, creams and ice creams.



Calizzano

A summer holiday resort, 650m above sea level, has a wide range of paths through an unspoilt nature with 13 freshwater springs. Its water is famous for its quality. It also comes in bottles and is sold all over northern Italy. The high street, via Garibaldi, leads to the church of San Lorenzo whose steeple dates to the XIV Century. A beech tree forest called Barbottina is between Calizzano and the Colle del Melogno. In all seasons its colours never fail to surprise excursionists.



Bardineto

Bardineto is in the southern tip of the Alta Val Bormida and is dominated by Monte Carmo. It was founded by the Del Carretto family in the XIII Century as proven by the ruins of its hex decagonal castle. The small and picturesque church of San Nicolò of the IX Century contains XV Century frescoes. The woods surrounding

Bardineto are famous for the quality of their wood, a local resource which for centuries sustained the glass factories of Altare. The surrounding mountains hide a labyrinth, a hypogeum of Karst caves, a paradise for pot-holers. Some itineraries offer the opportunities to admire interesting types of Karst erosions.



Millesimo

Millesimo was the ancient capital chosen by the Del Carretto family and is, now, one of the Most Beautiful Villages in Italy. Its medieval atmosphere can be appreciated under the porticoes of the high street and on the XIII Century bridge called della Gaietta, one of the few examples of fortified bridges still surviving in Italy. The castle, which together with the ones of Roccavignale, Cengio and Cosseria formed a four-sided system of control of the road to Piedmont through the Langhe area, hosts exhibitions and conventions.

At the foot of the castle, Villa Scarzella, where the Napoleonic Museum is housed, contains an important collection of prints, maps, notices and announcements concerning the Napoleonic campaign of Italy. The Palazzo Comunale still has the altar used to celebrate holy mass in 1809 by pope Pius VII, prisoner of Napoleon.

Just out of the town, the Romanesque church of Santa Maria Extramuros contains a XII Century font and important gothic frescoes. Few kilometres away, the Santuario della Madonna del Deserto is still regularly visited by pilgrims.

More clues for a visit

Cengio, whose original and ancient centre is perched on a hill, probably owes its name to the “cengie”, rock formations typical of the area. Roccavignale, well known for its presepe vivente – a re-enactment of the nativity – is dominated by the Del Carretto castle where nowadays exhibitions and events are held. Not far away, Plodio is a rural village made up of several hamlets. The hillside surrounding Cosseria was the site of the Napoleonic battle of the same name.

Protected areas

The woods of the area are ideal for excursions on foot, horseback or by mountain bike. Portions of Bric Tana and Valle dei Tre Re are protected areas to preserve their special geological substratum and the Karst phenomena which have created caves and potholes, e.g. the Tana della Volpe, the Arma and the Armetta. Menhirs and rock inscriptions are still visible - the only Bronze Age settlement known in Liguria - on the Bric Tana,

near Millesimo. Along the Bormida River, it is not unusual to spot grey herons and kingfishers. The naturalistic path of Rio Parasacco is in the vicinity of Cengio. The wilderness area of Monte Camulera and the naturalistic and historical area of Murus Altus are both near Murialdo.

Further up the valley

The Bormida branch of Mallare is named after the town of Mallare through which it flows. This town is a centre where wood is worked for different purposes. On Monte Alto the beech trees of Benevento can be admired.

The Bormida branch of Pallare flows through Bormida, a village surrounded by woodland and home of pallone elastico, a typical sport of the area, and through the village of Pallare, whose name comes from “Palera”, a legendary tree similar to an oak. Along the Millesimo branch of the Bormida River, Murialdo, “the village of churches”, is situated. The old ironworks are at the core of the Museo C’era una volta. Exhibits tell the story of the local community through everyday objects, old tools, altar clothes and holy vessels.

Osiglia and its artificial lake are a summer holiday resort. Canoe, kayak and windsurf races take place here and fishing as well as camping are also possible. Every ten years the lake is emptied and the area is thoroughly cleaned. When it happens, it is possible to take a walk among the ruins of the old village. Beyond the Colle dei Giovetti, Massimino can be reached. A rural village which still preserves the ruins of the old centre and medieval castle.

Useful Info

Napoleonic Museum
Via Enrico del Carretto, 29
17017 Millesimo
Tel. 019 564007

www.comune.millesimo.sv.it

Museo C’era una Volta - Ancient Time Life Museum
Riofreddo - Fraz. Borgo
17013 Murialdo
Tel. 019 95831

insiemeriofreddo@tiscali.it

Imbarcadero di Osiglia - Osiglia's Wharf
Località Barberis 17010 Osiglia
Tel. 019 5522519

www.lagodiosiglia.it
info@lagodiosiglia.it

Museo della Bicicletta - Bike Museum
info c/o Comune
17017 Cosseria
Tel. 019 519608

ufficiostampa@comune.cosseria.sv.it

Touristic Offer

■■■■■ Outdoors/Nature

■■■■■ Art

■■■■■ Family





BORGIO VEREZZI

Two hamlets to discover

Borgio and Verezzi were joined to form one town in 1933. Each one preserves its own identity, though. Borgio stretches along the sea front while Verezzi is perched on the hill. Paths connect the two locations in accordance with the development of the early settlements. Especially in the past, in Borgio, broad beans used to be grown in vegetable patches as well as among olive groves. Broad beans, salami and a gottu (glass) of nostralino wine are real treats. Local restaurants also offer snails cooked according to a tasty culinary tradition of Verezzi.



History and beaches

The modern part of Borgio welcomes tourists with its beaches and modern structures. The ancient part of the town is situated on the hill. Stone paved streets lead to piazza San Pietro dominated by a XVIII Century church with a neoclassical façade. Not far away a XVI Century watch tower. A Romanesque church, which in 1960 Pope John XXIII wanted to become the Santuario della Madonna del Buon Consiglio, can be admired along the trails of an ancient Roman road. Those who love to explore the sea must not miss the “bank”, a rock platform whose nooks and crannies house a rich variety of sea plants and fish.

A walk in the local hamlets

Verezzi, 200 m above sea level, numbered among the Most Beautiful Villages in Italy, is formed by the hamlets of Poggio, Piazza, Roccaro and Crosa with picturesque Saracen style houses and buildings. The cobble stone lanes offer pleasant walks with their ancient houses, piazzette, arches and public wash-tubs, in a corner of Liguria where time seems to have stopped. From the piazza of Sant’ Agostino and further up, from the church of San Martino, there is a view to behold. The “bell of the mother” strikes every evening for all the mothers in the world. Not far from Crosa, it is possible to admire a Phoenician mill, which owes its name to its middle eastern architecture.

Borgio’s caves

In Borgio, limestone rocks create a fascinating underground labyrinth of caves some kilometres long. The itinerary of the Valdemino cave goes on for 800m. Inside, the temperature is constantly 16° with 90% humidity. Some of the formations have curious and bizarre shapes. Endless shades of white, yellow and red place Borgio’s caves among the most colourful in Italy.

Not just drama

Every year, for the past 40 years, the superb piazza Sant’ Agostino in Verezzi has been the picturesque venue of the prestigious national and international Festival Teatrale di Borgio Verezzi. Every year the Veretium Prize, a gold reproduction of the ancient Phoenician mill, is awarded to the best actor of the drama season. The Teatro Gassman, in Borgio, hosts an international film review, which complements the Festival Teatrale, as well as several shows all year round.



Useful info

Grotte di Borgio Verezzi
Borgio Verezzi’s caves
Via Battorezza, 5
17022 Borgio Verezzi
Tel. 019 610150

www.grotteditborgio.it
grotte@comuneborgioverezzi.it

Touristic Offer

Outdoors/Nature
Art
Family





LOANO

The town of the Doria family

The history of Loano is closely connected with the Doria family, who ruled it from 1263 to 1737, when the town was ceded to Savoy. In 1795 an important Napoleonic battle was fought here. It was so important for the Campaign of Italy that this battle is remembered in one of the inscriptions on the Arc de Triomphe in Paris.

The Dorias turned the town into a place on par with their importance and wealth. They constructed buildings which make Loano still today an elegant town. Once a capital, Loano has become a lively holiday resort thanks to its natural resources and its buildings.



A walk in Loano

The Palazzo Doria is today the Town Hall. It was built in 1578 and has balconies and loggias. Inside in the upper story a Roman mosaic floor is still visible. The Torre Pentagonale is situated nearby. It was built to protect the town walls in 1608. The Church of San Giovanni Battista contains paintings by Genoese artists and on the XIX Century dome a statue of the Saint stands out. A long lane runs parallel to the sea front. Worth photographing is certainly the Torre dell'Orologio, built in 1774 on top of the Porta Passorino, with coats of arms of the Savoy family. The Palazzo Richeri and its porticoes can be found in Piazza Rocca. Not far away is the Oratorio dei Bianchi, where the brotherhood of the same name gathers. Large crosses are carried during processions together with those of the Oratorio delle Cappe Turchine near the parish church. Here, a marble group sculpture of the Madonna della

Visitazione, star piece of the traditional procession, taking place on 2nd July, is kept. During the event, those who carry the statue on their shoulders make it bow three times twice in front of the sea. It is possible to walk to the picturesque Borgo Castello, the medieval part of the town, dominated by a XVII Century castle, nowadays an imposing villa and park. Nearby, two XVII Century convents, built by the Doria family can be found, i.e. the one of Sant'Agostino, with the church of Santa Maria della Misericordia, and the Monte Carmelo complex, on a dominating hill, whose crypt contains tombs of aristocrats.

Loano and its fountains

Walking through the town, several artistic fountains which ornate piazzas and sea front can be seen. They are outdoors masterpieces made by contemporary artists who wanted to make Art a part of everyday life.

The modern and well organised marina is a magnet for those who love good restaurants, trendy clubs, discos but also sailing, motor boating and surfing.

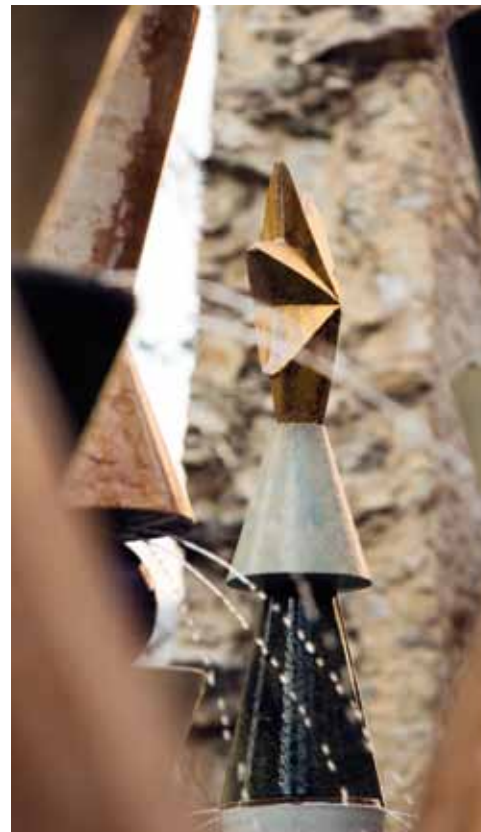
Loano is famous for Carnevaloa (Carnival of Loano), a colourful pageant of richly decorated carts which has a very popular summer version.

The summit of the Monte Carmo

Inland from Loano, Monte Carmo, 1389m above sea level, offers one of the best views in Liguria. Its summit, where a large cross stands, can be reached on foot in less than two hours from the Giogo di Toirano, which can be reached by car up the winding road of the Val Varatella. On clear days, the view is absolutely breathtaking and the outlines of Corsica, the Po plain, Mount Rosa and Adamello mountains are visible.

And not far, Boissano.

A few kilometres from the sea, among olive groves and orchards, the scattered hamlets forming the municipality of Boissano are situated on the sweet slopes of Monte Ravinet. In the main piazza, the imposing Palazzo Comunale, called Ca' di Gatti, can be seen. The parish church of Maria Maddalena contains a wooden statue of Mary Magdalene attributed to Maragliano.



Useful Info

Museo del Mare – Sea Museum
Associazione Culturale Marinara
Lodanum
Palazzo Kursaal, Corso Roma
17025 Loano
Tel. 338 8872754

Touristic Offer

Outdoors/Nature

Art

Family



BORGHETTO SANTO SPIRITO AND VAL VARATELLA

A land worth discovering

Borghetto is a seaside holiday resort where pleasant walks on the hills and excursions inland are also possible.

Not far from the coast, the picturesque and wild Val Varatella can be visited. This valley bears testimony to the variety of environments that Liguria has on offer. Along the main winding road, which goes up the valley, it is possible to admire limestone rocks full of grottoes and caves, olive groves, meadows and enjoy breathtaking views. Natural towers of dolomite are a paradise for climbers, who can test their abilities in every season and at different degrees of difficulty.



Borghetto and its origin

Originally a walled town, it was founded in 1288 by Albenga as defence against Loano. The historical centre, north of the Aurelia road, preserves the original rectangular layout. What remains of the XIII Century walls can still be traced in the local houses. Two towers and the southern door, which was rebuilt in the Baroque style, are still visible too. The parish church is dedicated to San Matteo. Inside, interesting pieces can be admired, e.g. a wooden statue of Saint Matthew and a canvass of the Martyrdom of Saint Matthew by G. Badaracco which shows a XVII Century landscape of Borghetto. On the cape of Borghetto, the imposing Borelli castle stands. It is private property and is surrounded by a thriving forest of pine trees. It was where a Roman villa was built whose small altar to the Matron Goddesses is still preserved. Later it became the site for the important convent of Santo Spirito.

Toirano. A medieval town

Toirano has been awarded the Bandiera Arancione by the Touring Club Italiano in recognition of the quality of its services and environment. Of Roman origin, it was fortified by Byzantines in the High Middle Ages and in the XII Century it was ruled by the bishop of Albenga. The battlemented bell tower – no other part of the walls has survived – can be admired near the XVII Century church of San Martino. Along the main lane, the ancient palazzo comunale and the Bishop's palace, with a three arch loggia, can be found. Not far away, the narrow lanes and tall buildings of the Toracco, the most ancient part of the town, can be admired. Ancient door frames, porticoes and small shops turn a simple walk into a very pleasant experience. The Museo Etnografico – Ethnographic Museum – is housed in the stables of the palazzo of the Marquises of the Del Carretto family. It supplies information on the

traditional rural activities, crafts and family life of the past. In the direction of the river, the medieval bridge, built with squared stones, and its three arches can be seen. Outside the town, visitors can see the imposing ruins of the ancient Certosa, a Chartreuse founded in the XV Century and home of the monks of San Pietro in Varatella for three centuries. The annual Festa dei Gumbi (oil mills) celebrates the oil production process, an activity which has always been the main feature of the economy of the town and area. During the event, cellars and oil mills, scattered all over the town, are open to the public and local delicacies and wine can be enjoyed.

Toirano Caves

Toirano caves are among the most beautiful naturalistic sites in Italy. The limestone massif of dolomite, cause of the Karst phenomena, contains more than 50 natural caves, with traces of the presence of bears and

prehistoric man, dating to the Upper Palaeolithic.

The temperature is constantly 16°. The itinerary, about 1,300m, leads through the Grotta della Bàsura (witch) and the Grotta di Santa Lucia Inferiore with incredibly thin crystal formations of aragonite and enormous stalactites. The Grotta di Santa Lucia Superiore, hosting a XV Century church dug into the rock and with a fountain of miraculous water behind the altar, is accessible to the public on special occasions, e.g. on Saint Lucy's day.

The castle of Balestrino

Balestrino, in a less important valley of the Varatella's, is a village dominated by the castle of the marquises of the Del Carretto family built in the XVI Century on an already existing fortified palazzo.

The ancient centre developed at the foot of the castle and had water and oil mills, lime furnaces and soap works. In the 1960's the inhabitants abandoned it because of the geological unrest. and moved further up the hill where they built the new parish church of Sant'Andrea. Nowadays, the ancient part still preserves an unspoilt medieval atmosphere which can only be experienced from the outside as no access is allowed.

Balestrino is popular with pilgrims. The Santuario di Monte Croce, erected on account of the apparition of Virgin Mary in 1949, is situated at about 750m on sea level and features in several itineraries.

Trekking on the hills

Those who love trekking must try the Sentiero delle Terre Alte, a path along the trails once connecting the coast and the Po plain. From Toirano it is possible to reach the Colle del Melogno, 1,000m above sea level and find the shelter house of Pian delle Bosse on the way, at 841m in high Val Nimbalto. In Melogno, the path joins the Alta Via dei Monti Liguri – Highway of Ligurian Mounts – considered a sort of “motorway” of Ligurian mountains where it is still possible to go trekking on the Alta Val Bormida watershed line.

Along this itinerary, it is possible to admire traditional terraced portions of land with traditional containing walls built without mortar, ruins of old mills and limestone furnaces, charcoal pits and round stone structures used as shelters by shepherds and wayfarers.

Still on the hills of Toirano, at 890m, the abbey of San Pietro in Varatella can be reached up a path through oak woods. The monastery, founded in the VIII Century owned vast portions of land between Albenga and the Langhe and Benedictine monks traditionally used them for rural activities. It was in fact the introduction of the cultivation of vines and olive and the construction of water and oil mills that played an important role in the rural and industrial development of the area.

Useful info

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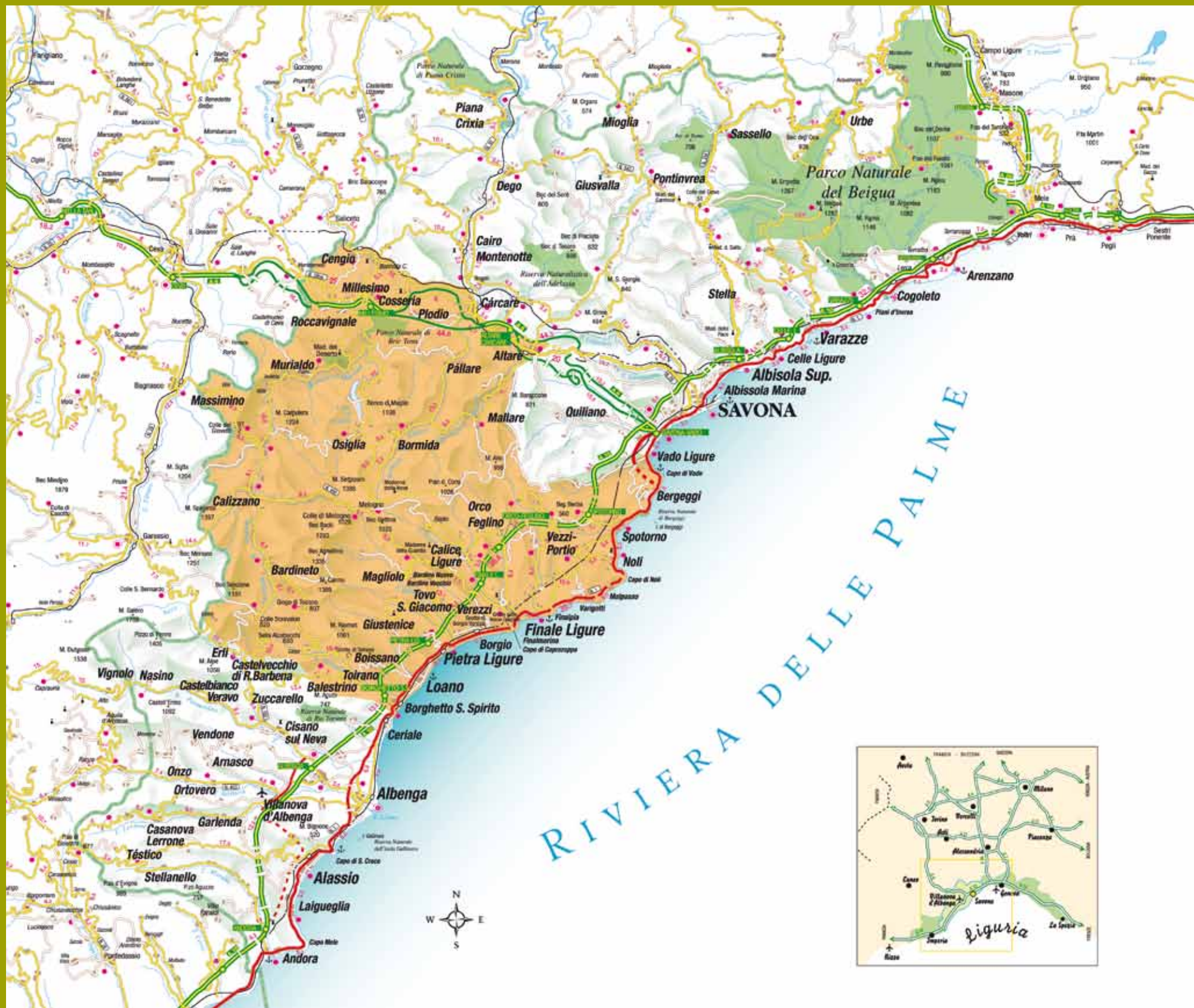
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Literature realised with funds of L.R. 28/06



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THIS BOOKLET WAS PUBLISHED BY THE DEPARTMENT FOR THE PROMOTION OF TOURISM FOR THE
PROVINCIA DI SAVONA

Art director: Gabriele Dalla Costa (www.archimede.nu); Layout and graphics: Archimede (www.archimede.nu)
Photos: Agriturismo Le Gaiare di Calizzano; Alessandro Beltrame (www.agbvideo.com); archivio Agenzia InLiguria; archivio Comune di
Borghetto Santo Spirito (www.comuneborghetto.it); archivio fotografico Provincia di Savona; Comune di Spotorno archivio Ufficio Turismo;
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Maps: M&R Comunicazione - Genova; Print: Algraphy - Genova; English translation: The Old Bag T. W.

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LIGURIA