

CINQUE TERRE NATIONAL PARK

Cinque Terre National Park (Italian: Parco Nazionale delle Cinque Terre) is a protected

area inducted as an Italian national park in 1999. Located in the province of La Spezia, Liguria, northern Italy, it is the smallest national park in Italy at 4,300 acres, but also the densest with 5,000 permanent inhabitants among the five towns. In addition to the territory of the towns of Cinque



Terre (Riomaggiore, Manarola, Corniglia, Vernazza and Monterosso al Mare), the Cinque Terre National Park encompasses parts of the communes of Levanto (Punta Mesco) and La Spezia (Campiglia Sunsets).[1] Cinque Terre was included as a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1999.

The collection of five cliff-side towns on the Ligurian Coast linked by a series of trails highlights a delicate relationship between man and the environment. As modification of the landscape has been so vital for the area's development and tourist industry, the National Park is an essential tool in preserving and maintaining the natural landscape while promoting sustainable tourism that vital to the economic success of Cinque Terre. To achieve its objectives, the Park Organization encourages the development of responsible tourism, able therefore to invest in the identity of the places and the territory's products, and thus save its immense heritage of terracing, now endangered.

DESCRIPTION

The Cinque Terre National Park was established on 6 October 1999 in recognition of the territory's considerable scenic, agricultural, historical and cultural value. Two years before, the area was added to the list of World Heritage Sites. The five medieval towns along the Ligurian Coast provide scenic views of rugged terrain reeled in with terraced stone walls, where the mountains of 'Appennino Ligure come straight to the sea. The form and disposition of the towns as they embrace topography embedded in the cliffs are a testament to the long history of settlement and the terraced cultivated lands to the

agricultural heritage of the area. As the first Italian park created to safeguard a landscape that has been mostly built by humans, the Cinque Terre National Park and Protected Marine Area aim to protect cultural heritage of “the park of Man.” The site's location and topography is a vital part of the identity of Cinque Terre, whose extreme typological restraints and access to the coast inherently provide for a delicate relationship between man and the natural environment. That relationship has led to a dual existence, focused on both land and sea. For more than a thousand years, man has cut the steep slopes for terrace farming and vineyards while at sea maintaining a strong fishing culture. The beauty of Cinque Terre lies not in a pristine environment void of man, but rather the interplay of the two.



Known for its natural environment and coastal hiking trails, Cinque Terre is a tourist destination that draws people from all over the world, the numbers rising to 3.5- 5 million in the month of August alone. While there is great concern for the environmental effects of such numbers of visitors, tourism is essential, having long replaced farming and fishing as the area's chief economy. Recognizing the value of sustainable ecotourism, the goal of World Heritage areas like Cinque Terre National Park is to maintain the ecosystem in a functional state by preserving the fine balance between tourism and agriculture.

FLORA



Even though the Mediterranean flora have obvious features, there are many microclimates often different from each other which created a huge variety of landscapes. There are pine, Aleppo pine, corks and chestnut. Rock and coastal environments produce numerous Mediterranean species such as samphire and sea cineraria. Flora is visible everywhere even as shrub rosemary, thyme, helichrysum and lavender. Also present are several species of trees and succulents clearly visible from many trails.

FAUNA

The environment is conducive to the development of life and habitat of several animal species. Among the birds are the gull, the peregrine falcon and the raven. Among

the mammals are the dormouse, weasel, mole, badger, marten, fox and wild boar (whose presence is resented for damage to crops). The reptiles that thrive in the rock are the common wall lizard, the lizard and various snakes such as the rat snake, the grass snake of Aesculapius and the viper; around streams live amphibians like frogs and salamanders.

LAND DEGRADATION

One of greatest threats to the Cinque Terre region and one the National Park works to address, is land degradation. Today, a large percentage of cultural heritage sites are classified by governmental authorities as exposed to landslide risk. In Italy in particular, whose terrain is 75% mountainous or hilly, 13/36 (36%) of heritage sites are affected by slope instability problems, including the Cinque Terre region.

The landslide activity of a region can be attributed to many factors. According to GNDICI, most current landslides in the Apennines are recently dormant, reactivated with climate change. While this explanation links the problem more to environmental and geological factors, mankind also plays a large role in the problem. Relevantly to Cinque Terre, changes in land use and agricultural practices have drastic effects on landslides and their outcomes. In a comparison of images of Cinque Terre land terracing in 1958 and 2000, there appears a clear increase in soil erosion and degradation of vineyard terraces that is consistent with agriculture abandonment in the 1960s as the main focus of the area shifted to tourism and away from the careful "landscape engineering" of previous centuries. According to city officials, in 1951, about 3,500 acres of Cinque Terre land were cultivated, compared to 275 today.

As land was already in a state of degradation in 2011, terrace abandonment is thought to be a contributing factor to the flash flood disaster of 25 October 2011. After 4 hours of uncharacteristic 22 inches of rain and subsequent flash floods, the towns of Monterosso al Mare and Vernazza were virtually destroyed. The other three cities, due to natural topography and effective draining systems, went mostly undamaged.

For these reasons, one of the foremost agendas of the National Park, is the maintenance and revitalization of the slopes. The value in promoting terracing is two-fold, as it not only addresses landslide control but also recognizes the history and traditions of the villages by bringing back the traditional Cinque Terre vineyards. The "Uncultivated Lands" LIFE Project, co-founded in 2001 by the European Community and the Cinque Terre National Park, seeks to recover the unused terraces and to return them to their previous success for production of Albarola and Vermentino vineyards. One such hill, Corniolo, is featured as not only an educational tool for researchers interested in safe and effective cultivating practices, but also as a "laboratory" to bring back the famed grapes that, in combination, shaped Cinque Terre's reputation as wine producers in the Middle Ages. A sub-project, in cooperation with Agricoltura Cinque Terre seeks to do just that,

by reintroducing some of the traditional ancient grapes of the region. In addition, the success of "Uncultivated Lands" has been an invaluable model for other areas, such as the UNESCO site of Ifugao, Philippines, who are interested in perfecting and re-establishing thousand-year old cultivation practices within their own communities.

UNESCO WORLD HERITAGE SITE

At UNESCO's meeting on 5 December 1997 the Cinque Terre, Portovenere and the islands of Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto, were added to its World Heritage List under the heading of a cultural landscape. An important site both environmentally and culturally, it was described as "the harmonious interaction between people and nature to produce a landscape of exceptional beauty". The addition of Cinque Terre to the list also addressed it as a world-known tourist destination. The site was enrolled under a number of criteria, including:



- Shows an important interchange of human values, over a period of time or within
- a cultural area of the world, in the context of developments in architecture or technology, monumental arts or in the planning or urban (landscape) in the design of landscape (ii);
- Is a remarkable example of a type of a complex of buildings or architectural or technological or landscape which illustrates a significant moment in human history (iv);
- Is a remarkable example of a traditional human settlement or land use that is typical of a culture (cultures), especially if they become vulnerable due to the impact of irreversible change (v).