



# Turin, Piedmont & the Italian Riviera

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## Why Go?

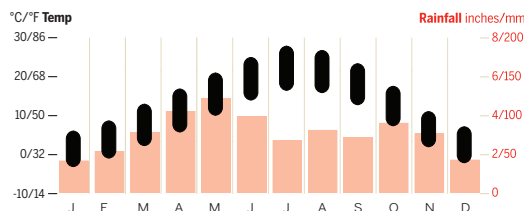
The beauty of northwestern Italy is its density. You only have to take a short train ride out of Turin and everything changes: food, culture, scenery – even the language.

The seduction starts in Liguria, a thin, precipitous coastal strip famous for its food (pesto and focaccia), swanky resorts and the once-powerful independent trading empire of Genoa. Piedmont is a flat, fertile medallion of land trapped between the Alps and the Mediterranean, an economic and political powerhouse that provided the nation with its first capital (Turin), a popular car (Fiat) and – more recently – Slow Food and fine wine. Mountainous Aosta, meanwhile, is a semi-autonomous Alpine region with a different history, its own language, and ample skiing and hiking terrain, all guarded by Europe's highest mountains.

If the three regions share anything in common it's their Savoia connections and proud sense of history. Italy, in the modern sense, was invented right here.

## When to Go

### Turin



**Jan–Mar** Most reliable snow cover for skiing in the Alps.

**Apr** Fewer crowds and better hiking on the Ligurian coast.

**Sep & Oct** Late-season hiking in the Alps and autumn food festivals in Turin and Alba.

## Northwest Culinary Inventions

- » **Pesto** Pasta sauce originating in Genoa made from ground basil, pine nuts, olive oil, garlic and hard cheese
- » **Focaccia** A flat oven-baked bread topped with herbs that hails from Liguria
- » **Breadsticks** The thin crunchy sticks known as *grissini* were allegedly invented in Turin province in 1679
- » **Nutella** Hazelnut spread first concocted by the Ferrero chocolate dynasty in Alba in 1963
- » **Fontina** Pungent, earthy cheese that has been produced in the Valle d'Aosta since the 12th century
- » **Arborio** Short-grain creamy rice used in risotto from the eponymous town in northern Piedmont

### SLOW FOOD

Slow Food was the 1980s brainchild of a group of disenfranchised Italian journalists from the Piemontese town of Bra. United by their taste buds, they ignited a global crusade against the fast-food juggernaut whose plastic tentacles were threatening to engulf Italy's centuries-old gastronomic heritage. Their mantra was pleasure over speed and taste over convenience in a manifesto that promoted sustainability, local production and the protection of long-standing epicurean traditions. Paradoxically, Slow Food grew quickly after its 1987 inauguration and by the early 2000s it was sponsoring more restaurants in Piedmont than McDonald's. In 2004 its founder Carlo Petrini opened up a University of Gastronomic Sciences in Pollenzo as a way of passing the baton onto future generations. The mindset worked. Today Slow Food counts 100,000 members in 150 countries and has attracted big-name affiliates such as Turin-founded supermarket company Eataly and popular ice-cream manufacturer Grom, as well as dozens of characterful and refreshingly slow restaurants – all of them defiantly individualistic.

## Best Places for Walking

- » **Parco Nazionale del Gran Paradiso** One of Italy's few true wilderness areas is packed with trails, wildlife and solitude.
- » **Courmayeur** The meeting point of three of Italy's great long-distance paths: Aosta's Alte Vie 1 and 2, and the 165km Tour du Mont Blanc.
- » **Cinque Terre** Cliffside hikes through terraced farmland and soporific fishing villages little changed since the Middle Ages.
- » **Barbaresco** Walks and wine tastings in the undulating vine-striped hills of Piedmont's Langhe region.
- » **Portofino** A priceless pocket of coastal wilderness sandwiched in between Italy's poshest resorts.
- » **Maritime Alps** The Alps' western extremity has majestic hiking possibilities flush up against the border with France.

### DON'T MISS

Alpine skiing is wildly popular in the northwest, in the Milky Way resorts west of Turin, the Valle d'Aosta and the town of Limone Piemonte near Cueno.

## Unesco World Heritage Sites

- » **Cinque Terre** Medieval fishing villages and landscaped cliffsides on the Ligurian coast.
- » **Residences of the Royal House of Turin** A collection of baroque pleasure palaces in and around Turin including Palazzo Madama, Reale and Venaria Reale.
- » **Sacri Monti** Nine sacred mountains in Piedmont and Lombardy with chapels and pilgrims' paths dedicated to the Christian faith.
- » **Palazzi dei Rolli** Forty-two Renaissance and baroque palaces in Genoa.

## Best Wines

- » Barolo
- » Barbaresco
- » Barbera d'Asti
- » Dolcetto d'Alba
- » Sciacchetrà
- » Asti Spumante