



[VARIED, UNEXPECTED AND ENJOYABLE HOLIDAYS IN THE FRAGRANT AIR OF LIGURIA,  
SURROUNDED BY THE MOUNTAINS THAT SEEM TO SINK INTO THE SEA](#)

## IMPERIA E VALLE IMPERO

Oneglia, together with Porto Maurizio, forms the city of Imperia. Its hinterland is dotted with small villages perched on the slopes, also known for the genuine cuisine with excellent olive oil and good wine

**T**he promontory of Parasio hosts the ancient hamlet of Porto Maurizio, with its characteristic winding roads and narrow lanes that lead to the top scenic viewpoint, where you can enjoy the sight of the gulf and the old hamlets of Marina and Foce, their parks, the villas and the well equipped lidos. It was the Impero River itself to determine the town's history. In fact its course divides Porto Maurizio from Oneglia, making them rival villages in past time: Porto Maurizio was faithful to the Republic of Genoa while Oneglia, at first, was a domain of the Bishop of Albenga, then it was sold to the Doria family until it was transferred under the Savoia's dominion in 1576. It was only in 1923 that these two villages reconciled and were unified into the Commune of Imperia. In touch with nature, here tourists find comforts, entertainments and, if they want, also tranquility. Imperia is the ideal place to go sailing, windsurfing or canoeing. The hinterland can better be visited by bike or horse riding. The other hamlets of the Imperia Valley can be reached by car.

## INTERESTING PLACES AT PORTO MAURIZIO

### **Duomo of San Maurizio**

The Duomo, the largest church in Liguria, is dedicated to San Maurizio, martyr of the Theban Legions. It is a neo-classic building, constructed between 1781 and 1838 outside the historical centre. The interior, with a central layout, is enriched with paintings mostly by artists of the second half of 1800. The cycle of five paintings of the internal façade is a work by Cesare Viazzi (Rest in Egypt, Quo Vadis, Domine?, The Fall of St. Paul of 1903, Cain and Abel, The Expulsion from Paradise of 1904). Of great value are the Crucifix by Antonio Maragliano and two paintings by Gregorio De Ferrari and Domenico Piola.

### **Convent of Santa Chiara**

History traces stand out from the medieval settlement of the hamlet that preserves the Convent of Santa Chiara. It was built sheer from the sea, on the site of the old town walls in 1365, and founded by the Clarisse nuns. From its portico you can enjoy a breathtaking panoramic view.

### **Borgo Marina**

Not to be missed is a tour to Borgo Marina: the beach, called "Spiaggia d'Oro" (Golden Beach), is well worth a stroll in any season of the year.

### **The Tourist Harbour**

The tourist harbour of this old hamlet is famous for the rally of Vele d'Epoca, an international event celebrated in the month of September every two years.

## ONEGLIA

Oneglia stands on the plain, at the mouth of the Impero River. From the Savoia family, who ruled it from 1576 to the unification of Italy, it inherited its Piedmontese features that you can see in the architectural structures of its main street Via Bonfante and in the central Piazza Dante (meeting places of the citizens), both of them framed by a long row of porticoes.

Among the monuments, the Duomo of San Giovanni Battista deserves to be mentioned. In its interior some works of Ligurian and Piedmontese painters of 17th, 18th and 19th centuries are preserved, besides a ciborium of 1500 by Gaggino da Bissone and a marble group of 1700 by Anton Giulio Maragliano. In the residential area amid the hills, the Art Nouveau Villa Bianca (named Villa Grock from the famous Swiss clown) arouses curiosity, while the promontory overlooking the sea hides the Casa Rossa, poet Angiolo Silvio Novaro's residence, among a greenery of palms, cypresses and olive trees. Behind the port, next to the old fishermen's houses, there is the Palace of Doria, birthplace of the great admiral Andrea Doria.

Oneglia is also famous for olive growing, characterised by the typical taggiasca variety. Via Garessio, the historic route of the oil mills, houses the Museo dell'Olivo, created from the collections gathered over decades by the family Carli, founder in 1911 of the oil industry Fratelli Carli. The Museum exhibits the century-old history of olive oil production: archaeological Phoenician finds, ancient oil presses, crystal oil cruets. It is housed in a small Art Nouveau palace, built in the 20s as the head office of Fratelli Carli Company and still surrounded by the factory itself. It also includes a specialised library.

The Museum is open from Monday to Saturday, 9:30-12:30am and 3-6:30pm.

Closed on Sundays.

Free entrance.

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## INTERESTING SURROUNDINGS

### VALLE IMPERO

A few kilometres from the coastline, there are the Apennine hamlets of the Impero Valley and Aroschia. The Impero Valley is the widest of the valleys, rich in olive groves and, for centuries, the main route towards Piemonte. The villages provide significant monuments and artistic places, interesting mixtures of elements from Liguria, Piemonte and Provence regions. In a few kilometers you can find varied landscapes and environments: grapes and olive trees gradually give way to chestnut, beech, hazel and then conifers.

## **Pontedassio**

In ancient times it was an important spot down in the valley, a commercial transit route; now it is a village with steep "caruggi", winding passages, secret small shrines and medieval buildings. There is a house made of square stones, of the 13th century, totally preserved. Some building complexes that still retain considerable traces of walls and doorways dating from the 12th and 13th centuries can be found along the present Via Garibaldi. In the 15th century, when Pontedassio became an important road network centre, oil presses and mills were built. One of them was the original seat of the Agnesi Pasta factory. To be visited the historical Museum of Spaghetti, created by the Agnesi family, the Parish Church of Santa Margherita and the rural Oratory of Santa Lucia. Not to be missed the sweet "canestrelli all'olio d'oliva" and the tasty and dainty fried eels.

## **Chiusavecchia**

This medieval village takes its name from an ancient dyke, which controlled the water system to run mills and oil presses. It is placed down in the valley along the Impero River, where it is joined by the Rio Maddalena. Here there is a characteristic two arched-bridge. The Parish of San Biagio and San Francesco di Sales, erected on the site of a pre-existing church, with a typical bell tower, was finished at the end of the 17th century. Inside you can admire a magnificent crucifix dating between the 15th and 16th century, characterized by a harsh realism. Overlooking the village centre, there is the Sanctuary of the Madonna dell'Oliveto, many times reworked, whose original building dates back to 1554. Famous are the elegant Baroque campanile and the magnificent organ by Nicomede Agati (1861), recently restored thanks to the financial contribution of the local population.

## **Chiusanico**

Chiusanico, defensive concentration of stone houses, full of medieval elements, is nestled along a stretch of coast which slopes gently from Pizzo Montin (953m). Recent historical studies argue that the family of Cristoforo Colombo is native of this village and that here was born the famous navigator.

From an artistic point of view, we would like to mention the Church of Santo Stefano, whose interior preserves a polyptych by Pancalino, as well as some refined polychromatic marbles of the 17th century, remains of the previous building. Also noteworthy, in the hamlet of Gazzelli, is the magnificent painting by Domenico Piola (beginning of 17th century) "St. Elizabeth visiting the Virgin Mary"; a trough dating from the 16th century in the hamlet of Torria; a nice bas-relief dating back to 10 March 1477 housed in the Parish Church of San Martino; the Oratory of the Disciplinati della SS.ma Annunziata, a work by Filippo Marvaldi; the Sanctuary of the Madonna della Neve.

The extra-virgin olive oil is the undisputed famous product of this land: in fact Chiusanico is immersed in olive groves and is rich in olive presses.

## **Colle di Nava**

Because of the important strategic position of Colle di Nava, that used to link Liguria with the Tanaro Valley, during the Napoleonic era, the charming but austere Forts of Nava were erected; of them the Central Fort can still be visited. The Col di Nava Accademy, very important for the whole western Liguria, gave importance to environmental education activities for schools, together with tourist-cultural ones related to holidays, nature and sport for all the people. The landscape is covered with fields and woods and is famous for the extensive cultivation of lavender. Of the old eight alembics that in ancient time were used to distil it, only one is still working and, besides the famous essence, it now offers a range of by-products

## *Cuisine*

In the hinterland the mild climate favours the cultivation of olive trees and the production of the famous extra-virgin olive oil, that has made Imperia known throughout the world. Olive oil, in fact, together with pasta and hothouse flowers (roses, carnations, strelitzias, etc.), is the most important product of Imperia.

The local speciality is the "piscialandrea" or pizza all'Andrea (or pisciadela, piscerà, machetera, machetusa, pata cu a pumata) that takes its name from Andrea Doria, born in Oneglia. Originally the pizza was savoured with the "machtetto". Later, onions, garlic and tomatoes, were added to the recipe. The "machtetto" is also used to savour pasta, boiled meat and fish. At Imperia stuffing is famous as well: zucchini, potatoes and grated parmesan cheese, eggs, fried onions, basil and sweet marjoram. Then the "curunete", crowns of small potatoes stuck on a thread and cooked in the wood-burning oven, the rabbit "alla paesana" cooked in crocks, the very tasty fresh fish of the gulf: swordfish, tuna, gilthead and the "rundanin".

Not to be missed the wine of the surrounding hills: Ve mentino from Diano Castello (excellent with aperitifs and dishes with fish), Pigato of Ranzo, and Pieve di Teco (dry white to be served with dainty dishes) and Ormeasco of Pornassio (dry and full-bodied red to be served with meat and game).

### *Getting to Imperia*

**By car:** SS Aurelia, from Genova or from France. Autostrada dei Fiori A10 Genova-Ventimiglia exit Imperia Ovest (Porto Maurizio) or Imperia Est (Oneglia).

**By train:** Porto Maurizio or Oneglia stations.

**By air:** The nearest airport is Villanova d'Albenga. The most important ones are Nizza/Costa Azzurra and Genova/Cristoforo Colombo.

**By ship:** Porto Maurizio tourist harbour.