

Alternates to the Main Coastal Trail

If the primary trails outlined above are closed—or you want a less crowded or more demanding alternative—consider these options.

Manarola-Corniglia via Volastra (2.5 hours): In the likely event that the Manarola-Corniglia trail is closed (but rewarding even if it isn't), consider the challenging hike from Manarola up to the village of Volastra, then north through high-altitude vineyard terraces, and steeply down through a forest to Corniglia (about four miles total). You can shave the two steepest miles off this route by riding the shuttle bus for 15 minutes from Manarola up to Volastra (about hourly).

If you prefer to hike to Volastra, you have two options. The national park's official route (trail #6/#506) cuts up through the valley, with less scenery. Locals have cleared a more scenic alternate route that begins with the vineyard hike on my self-guided walk for Manarola (page 353). Partway along this walk, where you reach the wooden religious scenes scampering up the hillside, take a sharp right and walk uphill, following signs for *Panoramico Volastra (Corniglia)*. While steeper than the official route, this trail follows the ridge at the top of the vineyard, with wonderful sea views.

Tiny Volastra, perched between Manarola and Corniglia, hosts lots of Germans and Italians in the summer. Just below town, in the hamlet of Groppo, is the Cantina Sociale, a cooperative winery. When you're ready to head for Corniglia, make your way to the village church (where the shuttle bus drops off) and look for *Corniglia* signs. From the front door of the church, directly across the piazza, find the trailhead (marked by an iron cross) for trail #6d/#586 to Case Pianca.



Here begins one of the finest hikes in the region, tight-roping along narrow trails tucked between vineyard terraces, with spectacular bird's-eye views over the entire Cinque Terre. You'll cut up and down the terraces a bit—just keep following the red-and-white markings and arrows. After passing a little village (and following signs through someone's seaview backyard), the trail enters a forest and begins its sharp, rocky descent into Corniglia. (To skip the descent, backtrack to Volastra and return by shuttle bus to Manarola.) High above Corniglia, you'll reach a fork, where you turn left to proceed downhill on trail #7a/#587 to Corniglia.