

5 Terre and Vernazza, the “Vertical Landscape”.

Dear guest, welcome in our land.

Let me give you a short historic overview of this place arriving to the challenges of nowadays, also briefly talking of the story of this apartment.

The apartment was finely restored in 2009; fresco ceiling and the three doors decoration are probably from early 1900 as well sitting room and bedroom cement tiles.

The house was built much earlier, considering its central position in front of **the church of Santa Maria di Antiochia** (built before **1318**), even if expanded and renovated during 16th and 17th centuries, when thereafter was erected the octogon bell tower that rises from the apse.

The first historic news of Vernazza are from **1080**, known as **Catrum Vernatio**, i.e. a fortified village (castrum), the place from where ships used to sail again pirate incursions.

Until 1200 Vernazza was in cooperation with the Republic of Genoa and finally with a public Act in 1209 the village was submitted to Genoa territories.



During **1400 until 1600** Vernazza kept its defending position, from its castle of which today is visible the circular tower probably built around 11th century, meanwhile the wine production started to be one of the economic fundamental of the village.

In the **1800s**, after a long period of stagnation, Vernazza returned to wine production, enlarging and creating new terraced hillsides. The result was a revitalization of Vernazza's commerce. At this time also the construction of the Genova-La Spezia rail line began, putting an end to Vernazza's long suffered isolation: as a result, the population of Vernazza increased by 60%. At once, the construction of La Spezia's Naval base based on the project of Napoleon Bonaparte, also proved important to Vernazza in providing employment for many members of the village.

Coming back to the apartment, the cement tiles of the sitting room and of the double bedroom are as told from late 1800/early 1900, as well the fireplace marble frame.

In the flooring of the sitting room some of the tiles are darker, some are spotted, mainly close to the fire place: color change is due to time pass and it is not possible to remove it, nor “clean” it. In some other parts tiles move a bit because the below support is still the original one, made of reeds (bamboo) or look like some of them have been replaced, but at today there are not anymore available of these.

The house plant also includes the second bedroom with shower room (this added in 2009), originally belonging to the building aside, connected by the kitchen passage where the kitchen still preserves the original coal stove hood.

Because of the central position in the village, directly facing the harbor, the corner position with windows on three sides, the apartment larger size respect the original plan, as well as the quality and style of decoration details, make it possible that this apartment was used in the past by an important family in respect of Vernazza community.

With the arrival of the **20th century** Vernazza experienced a wave of emigration as working the land was viewed less wealthy respect the efforts required and in respect of other modern works, causing the diminishing of further agriculture exploitation.

The beauty of 5 Terre landscape also was the inspiring element of a great poet, **1975 Nobel Prize, Eugenio Montale** who, born in Genoa, used to spend his holidays in Monterosso since he was a child.

Merigiare pallido e assorto.

*Sit the noon out, pale and lost in thought
beside a blazing garden wall,
hear, among the thorns and brambles,
snakes rustle, blackbirds catcall.*

.....

*Observe between branches the far-off
throbbing of sea scales,
while the cicadas' wavering screams
rise from the bald peaks.*

*And walking in the dazzling sun,
feel with sad amazement
how all life and its torment
consists in following along a wall
with broken bottle shards embedded in the top.*

Translated by Jonathan Galassi in 1998.

Then in the years **1980 - 1990** people from the Northern Italy or from the surrounding towns started looking for a holiday home in the area. In a few words, they were discovering the Five Lands as genuine places, thus preferring them to more popular - and more crowded! - destinations.

While Italy was becoming more and more industrialized and less rural, a new life might start for the old fishermen's houses or country huts now increasingly rarely used for the purposes they had been built for: they could be used as vacation homes to people who were going to love these lands – harsh, difficult-to-live lands on one side and beautiful, unique lands on the other side.

In **1997**, together with **Portovenere** and the **Island of the Poets' Gulf** (Palmaria, Tino and Tinetto), the **Cinque Terre** were declared **World Heritage Site by the UNESCO**.

Since 1999, the **National Park of Cinque Terre** has been created, not only for the enchanting beauty of this area, but also to underline the strong relationship between men, land and nature, such as a unique environment.

Houses built around a wine-cellar shared by several families inside the villages or in the hamlets overlooking the sea or secluded cottages located in the vineyards started to be cultivated again. Within the villages, tower houses built by the seamen on the rocks, with only one room in each floor and a roof terrace, have been refurbished for a new dwelling. Or stone cottages located within the vineyards accessible only on foot, with pergolas of vines, enclosed with rosemary hedges and agaves. Contemplative sites have been restored and are now a retreat from everyday hassle and bustle. Fallen dry stone walls built to retain the terraces cultivated with vineyards and olive-yards in this **“vertical landscape”** have been fixed. It has been a slow reconstruction process where once again Man – whether a local or a new dweller – has started a dialogue with Nature in obedience to the technical and environment constraints for building set forth by Landscape Regulations aiming at preventing uncontrolled settlement and preserving the authenticity and appeal of these places.

Today, the aim is to make the sensitive character of this environmental, naturalistic and historical site coexist with the flows of visitors coming every year from all over the world. The Five Lands and its tracks have been a world-class tourist destination for fifteen years now. The risks of overcrowding or the impacts of thousand day trips on this sensitive environment must be considered in the framework of an ecologically sustainable development program as expected by the **Cinque Terre National Park Authority** being committed to the ***European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas (ECST)***.

What does this mean in practical terms? To be able to convey the sensitive character of this territory while protecting its traditions and appeal, its food, its fauna and flora bio-system, and to explain how Man and Nature had coexisted side by side over millennia, whilst also minimizing the impact of hit-and-run tourists on the environment for conscious travellers.

It is due now to remember about **October 25th, 2014 Mud Flow** after an extraordinary water fall. For this event 3 persons of Vernazza died, and others in the area between Monterosso and Beverino. All 2015 Winter and 2016 Spring were spent to recover the village, which is now as it was before, but more aware of the actions to take on the territory before and in case of strong storm forecast.

In case of storm forecast people is invited by the local police to stay mandatory inside home: please follow the instructions in case it may be the case.





October 25th, 2014 Mud Flow

At the end, I hope you can enjoy what we can offer to our guests, such as the care we have of this apartment preserving it from time pass, or when back from paths seated in the sitting room listening to the Italian lifestyle that carry on out of the windows in the piazza below, the sunsets, the colors palette of the houses and the bright of the sea, our food, the lavish ice creams and our good wine!

Cristina & Staff.

<http://www.solerosso.net/>

email: cristina.bisa@aremanagement.it

mob +39 335 740 3778