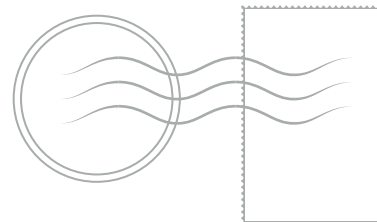


POSTCARD

Porto Venere



A shore excursion from Azamara's newest ship *Onward* has
Clare Vooght seeing pasta and pesto in a whole new light

"In Porto Venere, we've perfected the art of being frugal," says Andrea, our guide, as we gather under the shade of pine trees in the medieval seaside town on northwest Italy's Ligurian coast. "The population here is said to be the most stingy in the whole country."

It has clearly paid off, though. As is often the case in Italy, frugality created a humble sauce turned global staple: pesto, made with readily available herbs and the pine nuts growing on those branches above us.

Pesto is one of the region's most famous exports, and although it might be more closely associated with plates of student grub, unctuous with melted cheese, the pesto you get here is anything but.

I would never have given pasta and pesto much thought had it not been for our shore excursion from *Azamara Onward*, during its pre-inaugural sailing, to Porto Venere, where jars of the stuff are piled up for sale along the romantic, stone-paved narrow streets between houses painted in all the hues under the sun.

The town is known for inspiring the works of English poets Lord Byron and Percy Shelley in the 1800s. Restaurants lining the harbour serve up lots of the green nutty stuff, but we're taking a boat to Buranco Winery in Monterosso for ours.

Monterosso is one of a string of five coastal farming villages in the winegrowing region of Cinque Terre, which celebrates its 25 years of protected Unesco status this year (pretty Porto Venere, the next town along, is often called Cinque Terre's 'sixth village').

The easiest – and most impressive – way to reach Monterosso is by ferry, taking in the villages and vineyards that cling to the cliffs, from the sea.

We arrive in the harbour for the short walk through lemon groves, up to the winery for a plate of handmade pasta with flavour-packed chopped basil and chunky pine nuts, topped with a sprinkling of parmesan. It's hearty and satisfying, zinging with the fresh basil, and perfect with a glass of the winery's crisp, white Magiöa. All this, overlooking Buranco's vines lining the slopes, is about as far from those stingy student meals as you can get. **TW**



BOOK IT

Azamara's seven-night Italy Intensive Voyage on board *Azamara Onward* begins in Monte Carlo, stopping in Genoa, Santa Margherita, Porto Venere, Livorno (Florence and Pisa), Elba and ending in Civitavecchia (Rome). Prices start from £1,463 for a departure on April 22, 2023. azamara.co.uk



FROM TOP: The harbour at Porto Venere, Cinque Terre's 'sixth village'; fresh pesto made with local ingredients

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