

OUTDOOR



Riviera Kayak

Paddling along the coast,
the Province of Savona seen from the sea



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Paddling along the coast, the Province of Savona seen from the sea...



Liguria is a land on the sea, enclosed between the mountains and the coast, with few plains and many steep and rough slopes, the shape of which has been modelled by man over centuries of hard and patient work.

Traditionally, tourists have always been attracted by the beautiful beaches, by the medieval hamlets, by the culinary specialties on offer... More recently, a great impulse has come from the discovery and promotion of the hinterland, which is also rich in splendid natural and architectural scenarios.

Much fewer people, however, have had the chance of enjoying the coast of Savona from a different point of view: the one you can enjoy beyond the line separating the land from the sea.

Certainly, it is necessary to get away from the sunny peace of the beach. But all you need is a small craft to enjoy these beauties from a new and unexpected angle.

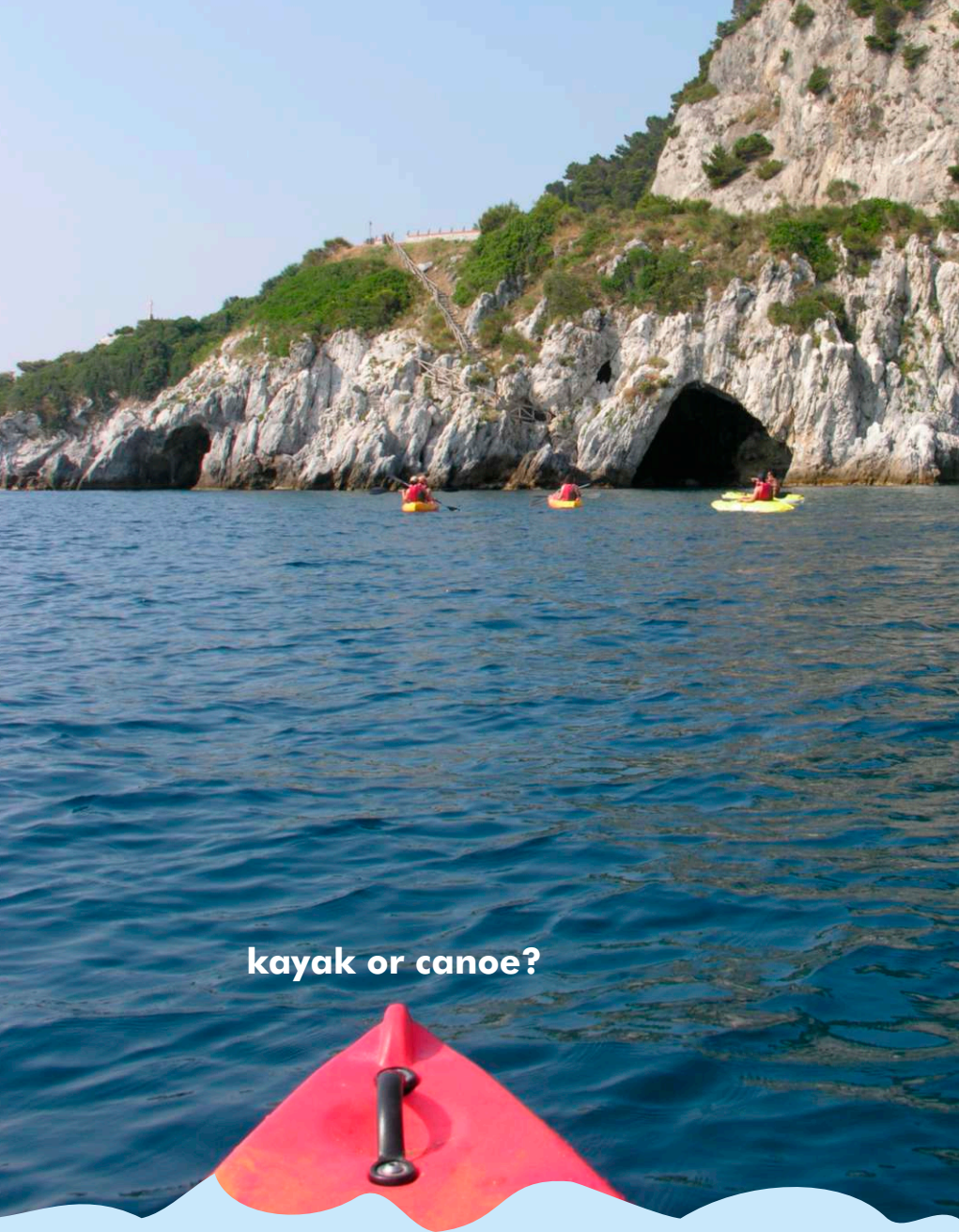
The panorama you can enjoy just a few meters off the shore is unique and always breathtaking, alternating steep cliffs and peaceful sandy shores.

Long stretches equipped for welcoming tourists, with their colourful umbrellas, fade away into cliffs overhanging the sea, enlivened only by the screeching seagulls.

Very simply, with a small canoe, a kayak, or a stand-up-paddle (SUP), you can start a new adventure and discover your own sea-faring spirit, modern explorers of the magnificent coastline that characterizes the Province of Savona.

Why "Riviera Kayak":

- to organize one-day canoe outings between one place and another, based on the distances shown on the maps and making use of the information provided in order to improve one's knowledge of the Savona coast
- to plan a trip of several days along the coast of the province, combining sports with tourism and culture
- to stimulate one's desire to try this means of transportation to travel and to observe the natural environment of the coast!



kayak or canoe?

The kayak is one of the simplest and most ancient means that humans have ever utilized to travel on the waters of lakes, rivers or seas.

The term, of Inuit origin, literally means “**man's boat**”.... and it could be no different, considering that the human element is the driving force!

Born therefore to satisfy the hunting needs of the Eskimo people, built by covering a simple wooden structure with skins, it has become in a short time an extraordinarily efficient tool for water sports: there are many models, according to the needs and type of waters to navigate in.

You can find shapes that are suitable for sea waves, for the quiet waters of a small lake, for the rapids of a swollen river... Indeed, a hull for any need!

The term **kayak**, as used in this publication for simplicity, means a hull pushed by one or several people, equipped with a two-bladed paddle, which is dipped alternatively in the water to provide the driving force needed.

The term canoe means instead, more precisely, a craft with a single-bladed paddle, suitable for rowing from a knee-standing position, suitable to open hulls, typically associated with the classical Canadian shapes or to the outrigger crafts of Polynesian origin.

The evolution of the species has led to the introduction of the sit-on-top models, easy to use and unsinkable, very suitable for use from the beach, in which the paddler sits on top of the craft, instead of inside a cockpit.

Of late, the **S.U.P.** (stand up paddling) has reached Italy: It is a sort of surf table, of clear Hawaiian origin, in which the person paddles in a standing position with a long single-bladed paddle. Good coordination and balance are required! It is definitely very fun and very close to the water element!

As for the sea-faring kayak, which we have chosen for its ability to face the waves and the wind, it is built in many different shapes and using the most varied materials.

From sophisticated resin and composite-fibre hulls, to simple yet sturdy ones made of polyethylene, through the foldable crafts that can be carried in a suitcase (wooden or aluminium structure sheathed in canvas) and finally the **"inflatable"** ones... you have a very wide choice, depending on the available budget, the transportation requirements, and you skill.

The choice will also be motivated by the use you want to make of it: an easy journey along the beach or an adventurous crossing along the coast but with some digressions further offshore?

However, if you want to feel the emotion of real "navigation", you should turn to specific models, suitable to the sea in all its conditions (calm, rough, windy, etc.).

We believe that the kayak's structure makes it the most suitable means for short or long crossings, even if the conditions are not completely favourable. It is safer and more stable, maybe with a loading capacity that meets the need of transporting what is necessary for excursions lasting several days.



a single kayak of the sit-on-top type...



...and a double kayak of the closed type with cockpit



a S.U.P. rounds Capo Caprazoppa



the paddle, our link with the water...



Safety first!



Talking about **safety at sea** means dealing with a complex topic which is however of primary (and vital!) importance. Knowledge of the sea, your craft, and most of all your capability is a fundamental requirement to handle safely your adventure ground!

The advice is to “enter” the sea with humility and the awareness of your limits.

However, it is also the respect for the environment, the knowledge of sea and land fauna, the appreciation for the work of those people who derive their sustenance from the sea... that will transform these days of sports activity into an experience to remember forever!

Notice to fellow seafarers...

Current regulations require mandatory safety equipment to face the open sea, a topic that is outside the scope of this publication... But be careful, because it is very easy to get carried away (and lose your paddle!) and get too far away from the shore, maybe to "cut" across a gulf and reach your destination more quickly!

If you want to avoid the expenses of buying safety equipment and trouble of transporting it, just **do not exceed the distance of 300 metres from the shore**.

Beyond this limit (learn to make an estimate, maybe by consulting a nautical map or by using GPS) you must have the approved individual life-vest and a ring lifebuoy with a recovery rope. In some stretches of the Riviera, in the summer season, bathing establishments place specific buoys signalling the 200 metre mark of the area reserved for swimming, which can be a useful reference for navigation.

Specific launching corridors, these too marked by small buoys, will have to be crossed watching out for any other vessels.

Please be reminded that swimming is forbidden in harbour waters and up to 100 m from their entrance, as well as at river mouths.

For further information you can consult:

www.guardiacostiera.it

Recommended equipment

For a more challenging navigation, you should have the following **equipment** on board:

- an individual **life-vest**, suitable for your size (possibly an approved one)
- only if you have a kayak of the type with a cockpit: the **splashguard**, a container with a handle (but also a **plastic bottle cut in half** is ok) and a sponge to empty or dry up the water that will inevitably enter the vessel. A light plastic pump may be useful if the cockpit is completely flooded after capsizing! At least two **air bags**, at the bow and at the stern, if you do not have watertight peaks: the purpose is to make your "boat" unsinkable
- a **cell phone** with fully charged battery in a small waterproof case
- a **small rope** (cord) for a possible mooring or for emergency towing by another craft
- abundant **drinking water**: in the open sea, dehydration is always lurking because of the sun and wind
- whatever else is needed to protect you from sun rays which are amplified by reflection on the water:
 - **creams with a high protection factor, sunglasses, a cap** with a visor, a light-coloured cotton t-shirt or a Lycra anti-UV-ray technical shirt, a neoprene vest when the temperature is low.

Optional equipment

- accessories for swimming in the hidden coves and shoes for walking on the rocks
- a **diving mask, a mouthpiece and flippers** for **snorkelling**
- a **camera or video camera** to catch the most magnificent moments (if you do not have an underwater model, you can get a universal case, either rigid or in soft plastic to protect your precious gadget from the inevitable sprays when you are paddling). A good alternative, where you can also stash away documents and keys, is a **watertight box** with a screw-on cap to fasten to the hull with a small rope and a snap-hook.



The best season to start?

As for the weather, the best seasons are late spring, summer and early fall. The water temperature is not a decisive factor, you can paddle also in winter by wearing thermal clothing, but a milder season will allow you to go for a swim!

It is fundamental, however, to consult the **weather forecasts** to decide if it is possible to go out to sea: many weather websites give information about the winds and the state of the sea.

Remember that weather conditions may change suddenly and that a stretch of sea that had been covered easily and quickly with a tail wind may become very challenging and tiring with a headwind!

At local level, we suggest the site of the Agenzia Regionale per la Protezione dell'Ambiente Ligure (Regional Agency for the Protection of the Ligurian Environment): www.arpal.gov.it and the site of the nautical association "Assonautica" in the town of Imperia: www.assonautica-im.it/meteo

What happens if I capsizes?

During navigation along the shore, it might happen that your craft capsizes... a moment of distraction, the wave created by a motor-boat... and there you are in the water! Nothing special, you are close to the shore and if you cannot get back on board you can always swim to the beach, maybe towing the kayak with a small rope.

A golden rule is **never to let go of the kayak!**

It is much easier to spot a coloured hull than a swimmer, especially when the sea is rough. Actually there are many methods to get back on board, more or less easy to put into practice, which vary depending on the type of craft you have. To paddle in a group is certainly more fun than doing it alone... and it is much safer. It is easy to help a fellow paddler to get back on board by holding his/her kayak steady.

If you are new to kayaking, before braving a challenging voyage, we advise you to attend a course in a specialized centre where instructors will teach you the basics of paddling and the most common safety techniques and manoeuvres.

Surely the Nautical Club or Canoeing Association closest to you will put you into a group you can share your passion with.

Some training is surely a good opportunity to try and improve the technique; along the coast of the Province of Savona, there are stretches (luckily few of them and not very long, for example the crossing of the two commercial harbours and of some cliffs) that make it difficult to reach the shore and that therefore have to be crossed only if you are really sure of being able to manage safely these small "emergencies". In case of rough seas, it is better to keep to a course at some distance from these natural or man-made barriers, in order to avoid the troublesome phenomenon of undertow.

Getting on and off...

To leave the shore, choose a beach which can be easily accessed from the road.

Kayaks are easy to transport and if you look well you will probably find an opening that will allow you to "launch" your craft.



Load whatever you need for your journey...

and get ready to paddle!



Early morning is the ideal time for this operation, since there is normally a light land breeze which makes the sea calmer. In the **presence of waves** you should consider whether taking to the sea or giving up and waiting for a better time. You can obtain a precious help from professionals, lifeguards, fishermen, residents, to whom you can ask their opinion on the development of the weather conditions! Once you have started, you have to be careful of swimmers close to the shore, but also of the strong **swimmers** that sometimes go far offshore.

Similarly, when you decide to stop for a swim or to go ashore at the end of your fatigue, check the conditions of the waves carefully (they could be very different from the ones at the start, in both height and direction, because of changes in the wind and of the presence or absence of sheltered areas). Pay careful attention also to the quality of the **landing site**, because you will not always find fine sand... pebbles and semi-submerged rocks have to be assessed carefully!

Public beaches with and without facilities

Along the coast, there are many **bathing establishments**, but also **public beaches with and without facilities**. The latter usually offer facilities such as water, showers, toilettes, deck chairs and cabanas for rent, and bars. They may therefore be utilized as landing spots for a stopover in the course of navigation, or as launching/landing spots. Some public beaches without facilities have a tap/shower where you can refill your water bottles.



If you “navigate” also the web, a reference site if you want to start learning about this sport is: <http://www.kayakpaddling.net>

available in all languages and with well-designed tutorials, which are recommended also to the most experienced paddlers.

1530

**Toll-free number for emergencies at sea
(Coast Guard)**



East to West...



From Varazze to Savona

Navigation along the coast of the Province of Savona starts at the mouth of the **rio Arrestra** (*Arrestra stream*), at the entrance of the town of Cogoleto, the first municipality of the Province of Genoa.

Via Aurelia (*Aurelian Way*) runs just above the shore, which has both a bathing establishment (the easternmost of the town of Varazze), and a stretch of public beach.

Heading west you run along the cliffs of the place called "**Piani di Invrea**".

The shore is jagged and without beaches, except for small coves that are not suitable for landing. Along the entire route you are accompanied by people strolling along the beautiful promenade that connects Cogoleto and Varazze (the "**Lungomare Europa**", *Europe Promenade*), which has been built out of the old railway tracks after the railway line was moved farther inland. It is a route just over 4 km long, fully laid out for pedestrians or bikers, which has nine lit tunnels and affords very nice views of the coastline.

The seabed along this stretch of coast has been listed among the Sites of Community Importance (*in Italian SIC*) thanks to the presence of **Neptune grass** (SIC: "**Fondali di Arenzano – Punta Invrea**").

The coast has the typical metamorphic rocks (serpentine schists) that are found in the whole area of the **Monte Beigua** massif, with the typical grey-green colour, alternated with whitish outcrops.

At the end of the promenade, you can easily recognize the so-called "**Villa Araba**" (*Arabian Villa*), which features on the seaside façade a beautiful sundial dated 1929, with the motto "*Sine sole sileo*" (*I am silent without the sun*).

The Varazze shore is long and features nice beaches, interrupted by the mouth of the Teiro torrent, up to the entrance of "**Marina di Varazze**" (*Tourist port*). Breakwater areas have been created recently to favour the formation of waves that can be ridden by surfers.

Next to the marina, you can see the sheds of the **former Baglietto shipyards**, which, dating back to 1854, were the pride of the town and an important source of employment specialized in the construction of cutting-edge yachts.

The coast is dominated by the imposing profile of Monte Beigua, with its flat top, which can be recognized by the several communication antennas on top. This true mountain barrier prevents the inflow of the northern winds and therefore makes the winter climate of Varazze milder than in neighbouring places.

A stretch of cliffs separates Varazze from Celle Ligure; the Via Aurelia always runs just a few meters above sea level. Another Site of Community Importance (the "**Fondali di Varazze-Albisola**") can be found here, once again with broad expanses of Neptune grass.

The town of **Celle Ligure** is particularly charming for its promenade with the sea front of façades painted in typical Ligurian style, with different colours and quaint decorations. The beach is wide and pebbly.

At the western end, there is a small marina, followed by another stretch of cliffs with no landing site until Albisola.

Watch out for a semi-submerged rock which, in case of rough sea, is difficult to see: you can identify it by the breakers it creates when the waves come in.

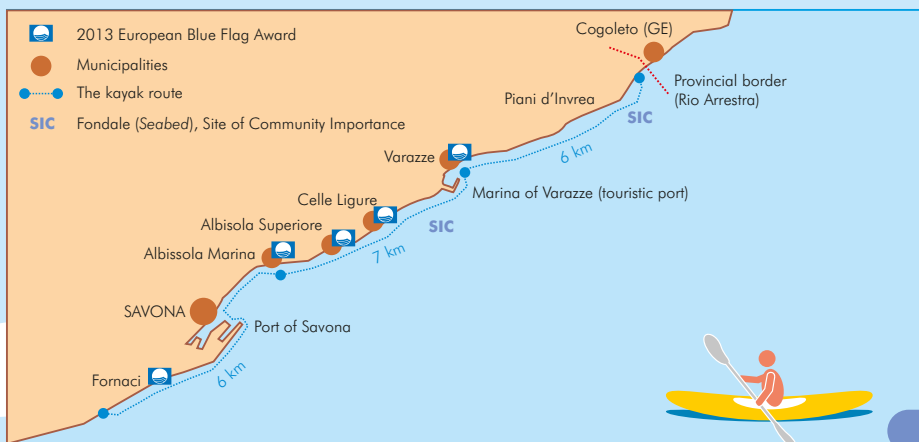
A curious feature of the scenery of this stretch of cliffs is the so-called “**Buco del Prete**” (Priest’s Hole) near **Capo Torre**, just before entering the bay of the two Albisolas. It is a rather narrow gap in the conglomeratic rocks, which can be crossed in kayak only with calm seas.

The parks of the villas, with their tall stone pines, rise from the Capo Torre, which is crossed by the tunnel of the old railway, which has been recently renovated within the scope of the promenade linking Albisola and Celle.

The seafront of **Albisola Superiore e Albissola Marina**, separated by the mouth of the Sansobbia torrent, is famous for the artworks that embellish it. Some ceramic works were created recently on the side of Albisola Superiore; on the side of Albissola Marina, in the 1960’s, 20 panels were created by just as many artists who patronized the area, using the technique of the mosaic with small tiles in coloured glass paste. This stretch of promenade is known as “**Lungomare degli Artisti**” (Artists Promenade) and in 2013 the 50th anniversary of its inauguration was celebrated.



The typical pastel colours of the seafront of Celle Ligure...



Nature beyond the sea...

The stone pine

The gardens of the villas facing the sea are often shadowed by lovely specimens of stone pine, with the unmistakable profile of their “umbrella” top.

The *Pinus pinea* is the species that produces edible pine nuts, which is widespread in the northern Mediterranean area, where it has grown since antiquity.

It is definitively a **heliophilous** (*sun lover*) species, which does not bear low minimum temperatures.

In Italy, it was introduced intensively from the 1930's as a decorative plant both in towns and in wide artificial pine forests. In Liguria, there are no true expanses of stone pine forests, but individual trees or small groups are very common.



The passage in the conglomerate rock called “Buco del Prete” between Albisola and Celle Ligure

The conglomerate cliffs

The coastline between Albisola and Varazze is characterised by **sedimentary rocks** – conglomerates - which are rather large, rounded rock fragments, cemented by a finer matrix. These rocks formed tens of millions of years ago (Late Oligocene) as a result of the accumulation of pebbles transported by torrents into a sea basin, which lay north of the ancient mountain chain, while the current **massif of Monte Beigua** was rising up.

The yellow-legged gull

While paddling along the shore, you may encounter many specimens of **yellow-legged gull** (*Larus michahellis*), a large-sized bird, which finds an ideal habitat in the coastal cliffs. The adult bird has a white head and neck, grey wings, yellow beak with a characteristic red spot and yellow legs.

The tip of the wings is black. The colour of the feather and legs of the younger specimens vary from grey to brown. They nest preferably on the cliffs where they build nests with plant fragments. The **Isola Gallinara** (*Gallinara Island*) is one of the main reproduction sites in Liguria.

In the last few years, they have adapted to life in an urban environment where they find plenty of food in garbage.



Beyond the beaches of **Albissola Marina** there is a group of surfacing rocks, immediately below the route of Via Aurelia, among which the one called the “**Madonnetta**” (*the little Madonna*), with a votive pillar on top. A gravel beach can be found immediately after, near the **Rio Termine** (Termine stream). The area has been popular for a long time among the inhabitants of Savona, who find here a small stretch of coast which has kept a certain natural look, despite the nearby harbour. On the rocks, you can easily see seagulls and cormorants, sometimes also daring youngsters ready to dive!



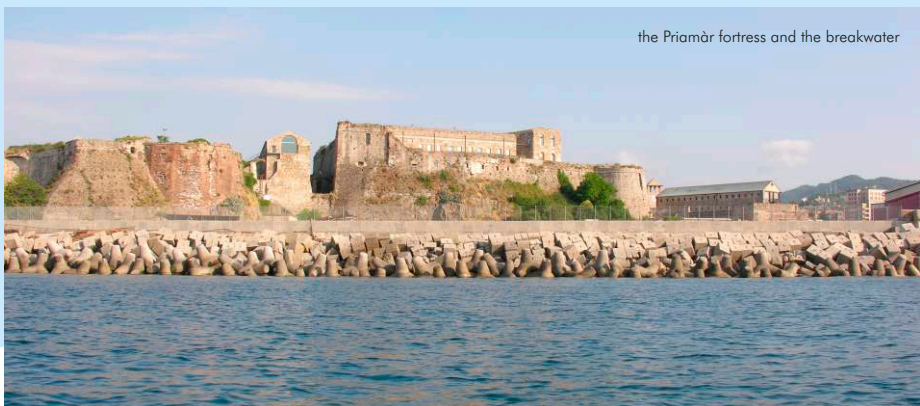
The “Madonnetta” rock at the first lights of dawn...

From here, you can enter the marina for a close-up view of the **Savona** dockyard and the famous medieval tower dedicated to the navigator from Savona, Leon Pancaldo, commonly known as “**la Torretta**” (*the small tower*), one of the town’s landmarks. In order to continue, you need to go beyond the harbour entrance and skirt the **breakwater** (be careful: 1 km of vertical barrier and 1 km of artificial cliff where it is not possible to land!)

At the end of the breakwater, overlooking the sea, you can find the 16th century fortress, Priamar. The museums of art and archeology can be visited too.

Once past this challenging stretch, the coast of the town of Savona features no more difficulties: you paddle in front of bathing establishments alternated with public beaches, with the outline of the mountain ridge in the background. In the immediate hinterland, near the pass of Bocchetta di Altare, you meet the geographical border between the Apennines and the Alps. The westward journey along the coast is accompanied by the background of the **Ligurian Alps**, which close the horizon to the northeast.

Noteworthy is the decaying, yet very beautiful villa in Art Nouveau style, “**Villa Zanelli**”, on the western side of the coastline.



the Priamar fortress and the breakwater



From Savona to Noli

Immediately after Savona, you arrive in **Vado Ligure**, characterized by a commercial harbour utilized by Corsica Ferries. Watch out for the ferries at departure and arrival. They are signalled by the sound of sirens!

The harbour of Vado Ligure is quickly overcome, by doubling the Capo Vado with its white lighthouse. The **fort of San Giacomo**, built in the second half of the eighteenth century on a pre-existing fort and dominating the harbour from a strategic position, is clearly visible.

Just after the harbour barrier starts the beach of **Bergeggi**, of artificial origin, realized with the seaside fillings along the course of the Via Aurelia. The abandoned railway dates back to 1870.

This stretch of coast is dominated by the **Isola di Bergeggi** (*Bergeggi Island*), which is distant only 250 metres from **punta del Maiolo**. The coast and the island are a **Protected Marine Area of the Liguria Region**. The village of Bergeggi stretches along the steep slopes of **Monte S. Elena**, with typical Ligurian-style dwellings, and more recent villas facing the sea. The coast is rocky, and characterized by calcareous cliffs which form small coves with cobble beaches and caves of various sizes at sea level. With the kayak, if the sea is calm, you can reach **"Grotta Marina"** (Sea Cave) (the largest one, the first one you find arriving from the east) and farther along to another smaller and narrower cave.

You pass the surfacing rocks called **"I Predani"** (a passage that is possible among the rocks only when the sea is calm), dominated by the cross rising on the homonymous point to commemorate the tragedy of the sinking, by a German U-boat in 1917, of the **SS Transylvania**, a British ocean liner while serving as a troopship, whose wreck was found only recently at a depth of 630 m. You can stop for a swim in the charming little cove called **"Spiaggetta degli Inglesi"** (*the Beach of the English*).

From here, we suggest that you paddle around the island, keeping on the outside of the yellow buoys delimiting the area, where navigation is forbidden for stricter prevention of the marine reserve. You can admire the reefs colonized by seagulls and cormorants, the Mediterranean vegetation, and the ruins of the tower. The rocky seabed, colonized by a very rich marine fauna, is just as breathtaking.

On land, just behind the Via Aurelia, next to the junction heading for **Torre del Mare**, it is possible to visit the **"Grotta della Galleria del Treno"** (*Cave of the Train Tunnel*), partially equipped for tourist visits. For information and reservations, please call: Municipality of Bergeggi +39.019.257901

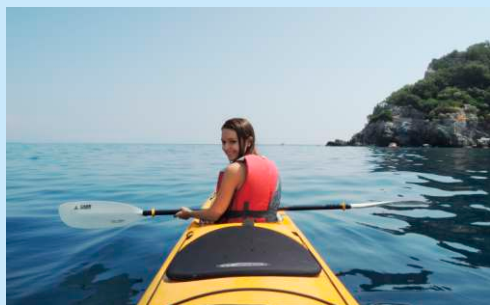
Once passed the headland of Torre del Mare, you enter the town of **Spotorno**, with a wide stretch of sandy beach, bathing establishment and beaches with facilities.

From there, a stretch of rocky coast takes you to the small, charming bay of **Noli**, which you can recognize from the ruins and tower of the **Castello di Monte Ursino** (*Castle of Monte Ursino*), which dominate it on the eastern side. The castle was built in the Middle Ages, but the current structure dates back to the sixteenth century. Noli was a **Maritime Republic**, allied with Genoa since the twelfth century.

A stopover on the beach is a must, to get into the atmosphere of a typical fishermen village, which is still preserved here. The historical city centre is separated from the pebbly beach only by the Via Aurelia. In Noli, there is still a community of fishermen who use the characteristic “**gozzi**”, traditional boats which are hauled ashore on the beach together with their nets.

On the promenade, there is an area dedicated to the sale of freshly caught fish. The medieval towers and the elegant aristocratic residences dominate the beach.

The seabed is clear thanks to the presence of calcareous pebbles, with dark patches denoting the presence of expanses of **Neptune grass**. (Site of Community Importance “**Fondali Noli-Bergoggi**”).



The “Grotta Marina” and the entrance to a small navigable cave at Punta del Maiolo



The Protected Marine Area

The Protected Marine Area of the Isola di Bergeggi was established in 2007, the only case in the Province, to protect the seabed around the island and the coast, which were already included among the Sites of Community Importance ("Isola di Bergeggi and Punta Predani"), and to promote knowledge about them. The island rises with its dolomitic rocks up to a height of 53 meters, covered with Mediterranean vegetation. It features a church of the fourth century A.D. dedicated to St. Eugene, a saint of Carthaginian origins, who is buried in the Romanesque church of **San Paragorio** in Noli.

It was later the seat of a **monastery of the monks of Lerins** (Cannes).

Currently, it is a private property and cannot be visited.

Marine erosion has created various caves along the coast and some small beaches set between the rocky sides where you can find species that have adapted to the unique cliff environment.



The cormorant

Together with seagulls, the common cormorant (*Phalacrocorax carbo*) is the species you can most easily find along the coast.

It is a rather large bird, slightly smaller than the yellow-legged gull, with black feathers with lighter shades around the throat, with a **long and thin neck and a long and sharp beak**.

Thanks to the big claws provided with a membrane it can give strong pushes to dive even at significant depths and for a long time to hunt the fish it feeds on.

It has some difficulties taking off instead, so you can see cormorants flying just above the sea surface before they can rise higher. It lives both in sea, river or marsh environments.



The dolomitic limestone of Capo Noli

The imposing cliff of Capo Noli, which rises to 271 metres, is made up of limestone rocks rich in magnesium (the technical name is "**Dolomia di S. Pietro dei Monti**"), which date back to 200 million years ago, when great quantities of limestone sludge were deposited on the bed of an ancient sea.

Movements of the earth crust later modified the morphology of these strata, creating folds and cracks which can be easily seen also from the sea. This area is part of the **Site of Community Importance "Finalese - Capo Noli"** for its great biodiversity, variety of natural environments and historical heritage.

Capo Noli, against the background of the "Punta Crena" Promontory



The fishermen's beach of Noli

From Noli to Borghetto Santo Spirito

Once you leave the Noli bay, you skirt the vertical cliffs of **Capo Noli**, which are cut higher up by the course of the Via Aurelia. If the sea is calm, we suggest navigating a few metres away from the rock to appreciate its shapes and colours. Here too the seabed is magnificent. If you raise your eyes, you can see the wide cavity known as "**Grotta dei Falsari**" (*Forgers' Cave*), which can be reached from Noli via a footpath. It is not unusual to see groups of climbers on these beautiful rock faces. Various routes have been set up for sports climbing. The Cape is followed by the long public beach with facilities of **Malpasso**, closed to the North by cliffs, which accommodate species of the Mediterranean maquis and Aleppo pines. A small cove, known as **Baia dei Saraceni** (*Saracens' Bay*), is formed by the promontory of Punta Crena, which separates Malpasso from the village of **Varigotti**.

On the slope overlooking the bay, you can see the charming church of San Lorenzo.

Skirting the cliff, you reach the southern side of Punta Crena. Dominated by a medieval watchtower, we find the "**Natural Oasis of Punta Crena**", with typical Mediterranean vegetation. The small sandy beach faces a wide cave and it is a welcoming and sheltered spot for a possible landing. Immediately after comes the long beach of **Varigotti**, overlooked by the beautiful "**Borgo dei Pescatori**" (*Fishermen's Village*), with the houses in Ligurian style painted in pastel colours.



The "Grotta dei Falsari" and nets ready for fishing



The medieval church of San Lorenzo



The Malpasso

After Varigotti, follow the rocky coast and before going around **Capo San Donato** you will find the “Marina di Capo San Donato” (*Tourist port*).

After the cape, you can see the hamlet of **Pia di Finale**, which can be recognized for the nice stone bell-tower of the Benedictine Abbey of Santa Maria.

The bay of **Finale Ligure** offers the possibility to stop over on the beach, overlooked by the historical city centre of the **Marina** hamlet.

On the west side, the hamlet ends with the industrial complex of the **Piaggio aircraft factory**, which is right on the beach, followed by the **Caprazoppa** promontory.

A cliff about two hundred metres high, cut by the Via Aurelia, has long been utilized for the extraction of building materials. Seen from the sea the enormous quarry, which has gutted the cliff, is really impressive. Until the first half of the twentieth century, there was a dune of clear quartz sand, which has disappeared because of exploitation for the production of abrasives, which has given the name to a cave of great historical and archaeological importance: the “**Caverna delle Arene Candide**” (*Cave of the White Sands*). Its importance is linked to the discovery of nineteen well preserved burials of the Palaeolithic age.

The finds include the skeleton of an adolescent with a trove of ornamental objects made of shells, bones, and deer antlers, for which he was given the name of “**Young Prince**”.

The fishermen's village of Varigotti and the tower of Punta Crena



Once past Caprazoppa, you enter the town of **Borgio Verezzi**. The eastern side is characterized by the **Borgate di Verezzi** (*Verezzi Hamlets*), with their typical Mediterranean stone homes, entrenched on the Orera hill to form compact patches, facing the coast.

The bell-towers of the church of San Martino and of the nearby oratory of the **Crosa hamlet** stand out on the ridge, while the **Piazza hamlet** is famous for its open-air theatre festival.

In Borgio, it is possible to visit the beautiful **Valdemino caves**.

Borgio's bathing establishments alternate with public beaches up to the border with the town of **Pietra Ligure**, near the **rio Bottassano** (*Bottassano stream*).

Also in Pietra Ligure, you can stop on the beach to visit the interesting historical city centre.

The shore between Borgio Verezzi and Borghetto Santo Spirito is homogeneous, characterized by a narrow beach with the Via Aurelia running in the back and the uninterrupted line of buildings.

Uphill, the shore is overlooked by the ridge of the Ligurian Alps, which reaches an altitude of 1389 m at the top of **Monte Carmo**. Despite the vicinity to the sea, about 8 km as the crow flies, it has typically alpine environmental features, so much so that it is considered a sort of botanical border between the Apennines and the Alps.

The streams that run from the hinterland (**Maremola** and **Varatella** are the main ones) flow in karstic areas, characterized by dolomitic rocks.

Here too, **beach rock formations** are found along the coast (see page 24). Near the shore, watch out for surfacing rocks, to be avoided during navigation, but interesting for the observation of sea species using a diving mask.

Loano has a large Marina, the Marina di Loano, in the eastern part of the coast and a nice historical city centre facing the sea. Paddling along the shore you can easily reach **Borghetto Santo Spirito**.

In the surrounding hinterland, you can visit the spectacular system of the **Toirano caves**.

To the west, the bay is closed by the ridge that runs from **Castell'Ermo** and **Monte Acuto** down to the sea.



Nature beyond the sea...

Isola Gallinara

With its 11 hectares of Mediterranean vegetation and cliffs, Gallinara island is the main highlight of the Albenga coast.

In 1989, it was a **Regional Nature Reserve**, as well as a Site of Community Importance, and it is not open to the public. It shelters one of the most important nesting sites of the **yellow-legged gull** in the whole northern Tyrrhenian Sea.

On the island, you can find rare species of Mediterranean flora; and its seabed is rich, both from the biological and archaeological point of view. Many **wrecks** can be found along this stretch of the Liguria coast, bearing witness to the intense traffic of ships between Liguria and southern France already in Roman times.

The island was a monastic centre from the early centuries of Christianity, starting with St. Martin of Tours, followed by the later construction of a **Benedictine monastery**, which lasted more than a thousand years.



The Gallinara island (photo by E. Berta)



Savona Bluebell (photo by E. Quaglia)

Vegetation of the coastal rocks

The coastal cliffs are the habitat for highly specialized species, which can withstand high sun irradiation, low humidity, high concentration of salts in the droplets of nebulised seawater.

Among the most significant species that bloom in late spring are the **Campanula del savonese** (*Savona Bluebell*) (*Campanula Sabatia*), which is present only in western Liguria and the **Vilucchio di Capo Noli** (*Bindweed of Capo Noli*) (*Convolvulus Sabatius*), present in Italy only in the Capo Noli area, a relic of the flora of the ancient Mediterranean Sea. More common species are the **Broom**

(*Spartium junceum*) and the **Red Valerian** (*Centranthus ruber*), which has a spectacular bloom, and the **Rock Samphire** (*Crithmum maritimum*) with its typical fleshy leaves.



Broom



Bindweed of Capo Noli (photo by E. Quaglia)



Valerian



Rock Samphire

From Borghetto Santo Spirito to Andora

A small cape, recognizable for **Castello Borelli** (*Borelli Castle*), separates Borghetto Santo Spirito from Ceriale.

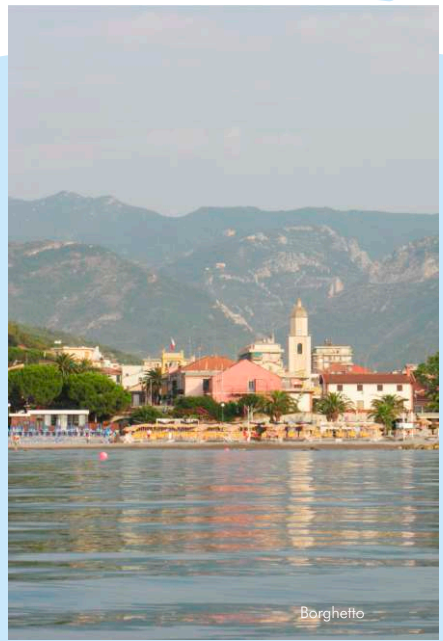
The historical city centre of **Ceriale** faces the sea, with its colourful and bright façades.

The wide **Albenga** plain, the only true coastal plain of the Province, has a flat coastline, long about 5 km, along which the railway tracks run directly along the shore, flanked on the mountain side by the Via Aurelia, and by the buildings linked to the agricultural activities that characterize the area's economy.

At the far end of Ceriale, you can see a camping ground on the beach; after that, paddle along the railway bed, until you reach the first beaches of Albenga.

The profile of the **Ligurian Alps**, whose watershed is far away from here, dominates the view to the north-west.

The view of the historical city centre is shut off by the buildings close to the sea. Today, it is farther inland of the shoreline, because of the movements of the riverbed of the Centa river. The plan of the historical city centre of Albenga follows the typical layout of Roman fortified cities and hosts many civil and religious buildings of great interest, from the early Christian era to the Middle Ages. Many towers, made of bricks, stand out, giving Albenga the nickname of "**town of the hundred towers**".





"Torrione della Coscia" in the centre of Alassio

Following the coast, you then reach the wide mouth of the **Centa river**, the most important water course of the Tyrrhenian side of the Province. Its wide alluvial plain is intensely cultivated with agricultural crops and flowers.

From here going west, the beach hosts several campgrounds with direct access to the sea.

This stretch of coast is dominated by the unmistakable profile of the **isola Gallinara**, which is over one and a half km away from the shore. Since special safety equipment is necessary to navigate at this distance from the shore, we suggest keeping within legal bounds and to enjoy the view of the island on its north-western side.

Once you have passed Albenga, you skirt a rocky stretch, as always cut by Via Aurelia, which comes before the **Alassio** bay. The marina is to the east of the town, sheltered by **Capo S. Croce**; once you have passed it, you will paddle in a shallow sea in front of the bathing establishments and the historical city centre.



The ancient circular rampart, known as **“Torrione della Coscia”** (Coscia Keep), was built in the sixteenth century by the Republic of Genoa for defensive purposes and it represents a landmark of the promenade. A very small public beach on the side of the keep allows for a stop right next to the historical city centre.

The bay is encircled by mountains rising up to six hundred metres, culminating with the sanctuary of the **“Madonna della Guardia”**, a very panoramic point.

At an altitude above the course of Via Aurelia, between Albenga and Alassio runs the ancient Roman road **“Julia Augusta”**, built around 13-12 B.C., which can be easily travelled on foot for an interesting historical and naturalistic walk (it is about 4 km long).

To the west of the bay of Alassio stands the small sea hamlet of **Laigueglia**, which belongs to the circuit of the most beautiful hamlets in Italy. The baroque façade of the **church of San Matteo**, which has two side bell-towers with domes decorated with coloured majolica tiles, rises above the sea.

Once you have passed Laigueglia, you skirt the western cliffs of **Capo Mele**, one of the most protruding promontories of the Savona coastline. On the cape, a small chapel faces the sea and there you will find the homonymous lighthouse, dating back to the middle of the nineteenth century and which is now managed by the Italian Navy.

On the western side is a small rocky beach and immediately after the entrance to the **Marina di Andora**.

Into the cove of the Andora bay flows the **Merula torrent**, the wide mouth of which is often flooded by the sea for dozens of metres.

Farther to the west is the administrative border of the Province of Savona. To bring the kayaks on land, you can use a narrow corridor of public beach, immediately after the mouth of the stream, just after a private beach (Sacra Famiglia), which can be reached by car.



Full crossing of the Savona coast

Some suggestions for those who would like to **navigate the entire Savona coast**, which we propose from East to West (but it can be also done the other way around).

The **total length is about 80 km**. It is not possible to indicate a precise length, since the distances depend a lot on the route you choose to follow, more or less close to the coastline.

We suggest legs of about 20 km, which can be done without problems with normal training.

Better trained canoeists may of course travel longer distances and concentrate the route in 2-3 legs. You can chart the crossing based on your needs, by verifying the average distances between the coastal villages shown in the previous pages, asking **Lega Navale (Italian Naval League) clubs, public beaches with facilities or bathing establishments** for “hospitality” for the night for the canoes and booking the overnight stay in the hotels. It is better to have with you a system to lock the canoe overnight.

For the canoeists that love the “open air”, it is possible to cover the entire crossing from the eastern border (Varazze) to the western one (Andora) or vice versa by **staying overnight in camping grounds** located directly on the beach, where you can land without any problem and have access to the services of the camping ground. In this case, the length of the legs is linked to the presence of structures with these characteristics (see page 29), exclusively in Savona (two camping grounds in the western part of town), in Ceriale (a camping ground in the western part of town) or in Albenga (some camping grounds, all on the western side of town). This entails a central leg, rather longer than the western and eastern ones, but which can be done with minimal training.

Enjoy paddling in the Province of Savona!

The coastal sea environment paddling close to the coast

From the eastern limit of Piani d'Invrea, between Varazze and Cogoleto, up to the Andora bay to the west, that is the two ends of the Province of Savona, those who run close to the coast can see cliffs, rocky environments and rocks, as well as long stretches of sandy or pebbly beaches right before their eyes. There are also works to protect the coastline, piers, jetties and marinas of various sizes which, over the years, have modified – and even altered – the coastline and the local currents.

As nearly everywhere along the Ligurian coast, the seabed declines rapidly and only if you stay quite close to the coast or anyway where the seabed is about 15-20 metres deep at most, you can have an idea of the type and nature of the sea bottom. If the water is clear and the sea surface is not too choppy, you can see on the sandy seabed 2 types of marine plants (fitted with roots and forming flowers and fruits, therefore not just seaweeds) which live in our coastal waters: the **cymodocea** (*Cymodocea nodosa*), which



Atfinia (*Anemonia viridis*)



Pelagia noctiluca

forms small undersea “meadows” or grows in rows, and **Neptune grass** (*Posidonia oceanica*).

Called locally also “zina” or “custo”, the Neptune grass is surely the basic element of the Mediterranean coastal ecosystems: once spread across a wide belt along the entire Ligurian coastline, thus forming ample undersea meadows up to a depth of 25-30 metres, these have now shrunk in size and thinned out because of anthropic pressure (urbanization, coastal regeneration, and pollution), so much so that it has been included in the list of the species protected by Italian and EC legislation, in addition to being protected by the creation and delimitation of SIC (Sites of Community Importance). On the cliffs or on the rocks of the seabed, you can recognize

several communities of **green seaweeds**, such as the tiny “sea umbrellas” (*Acetabularia acetabulum*), and several species of **brown seaweeds**.

Skirting the taller cliffs, such as the Punta del Maiolo (Bergeggi) and Capo Noli, or approaching the small emerging rocks that are spread along the coast, it is possible to see along the tidal area and in the area reached by the sprays, how marine life tries to “climb” out of the water and, vice versa, how elements of land life go down towards the sea and fight for space with sea organisms. It is therefore easy to spot “belts”, or areas, populated or

strongly characterised by the presence of organisms, maybe apparently insignificant or not so conspicuous, but extraordinarily suited to resist to drying-up or to immersion and to great variations in temperature and salinity, such as acorn barnacles, patellas and periwinkles. The formation of **beach-rock** (rocky structures originating from the natural “cementation” of ancient sands and gravel by the action of the alkaline carbonates dissolved in the waters that filter from the immediate hinterland and reach the coast)



beach rock



Ocean Neptune grass

which can be found between Malpasso and Pietra Ligure, may be the reason to paddle a little closer to the shore, exploiting the fact that kayakers have almost no draught at all: practically at the level of the water, the rocky banks offer the view of a shoal rich in sessile (i.e., fixed to the substrate) life forms such as **sea anemones** (*Actinia equine*) or **sea urchins** (*Paracentrotus lividus* and *Arbacia lixula*). While paddling, in the different seasons, you can catch sight of several sea creatures, more or less large and more or less common: in late spring and early summer, the **phytoplankton bloom** (phytoplankton = minuscule, mostly unicellular, vegetable floating

organisms) favours the growth of its primary consumers and of the relevant predators.

“**sea rafts**” or **velellas** (*Velella velella*) are small colonial siphonophoras, which are related to the jellyfish and that form periodically great swarms living on the surface; in summer, you can easily meet other plankton



young salema porgies (*Sarpa salpa*)

organisms such as the large white jellyfish called “**barrel jellyfish**” (*Rhizostoma pulmo*) – which are slightly urticant – or the more irritating **mauve stinger jelly** (*Pelagia noctiluca*).

During the entire course of the year it is possible to identify, with some experience, several species of fish that visit the coast or that venture in shallow waters to look for a protected environment, warmer and calmer waters or even prey.

Among the latter, it is easy to sight **damselfish** (*Chromis chromis*),

salema porgy (*Sarpa salpa*), **mullet** (*Mugil cephalus*) and **silversides** (*Atterina boyeri*), while flush with the water surface you can sometimes see the very swift **garfish** (*Belone belone*) or tropical **flyingfish** (*Exocoetus volitans*). Sometimes you can come across, off Capo Noli, for instance, **dolphins** and, for the luckier ones, also the rare **sea turtle** *Caretta caretta*.

Just a few metres above the heads of canoeists, in the stretches that are less anthropized, **seagulls** nest or **cormorants** stop to dry their feathers after underwater hunting. Also **kestrels** visit the cliffs of the western Savona coast and they are often sighted when they return to their nests among the highest and most inaccessible rocks.

Excluding some less interesting stretches of the coast, such as the Savona or Vado Ligure harbour areas, for those who paddle or row along the Savona coastline, it is possible to be distracted now and then by looking under the keel or letting the undertow cradle you under the cliffs.

It may be an opportunity to have a close look at the still beautiful, and more pristine points of the Savona coastline, which cannot be reached otherwise and which are easier to appreciate by navigating in the “*contemplation mode*” the kayak allows.



the painted comber (*Serranus scriba*)



Snorkelling is a relatively new discipline as regards its official definition, but it has been practised for many years by divers and most of all by free divers.

The word "snorkel", or in the German variant "schnorchel", dates from the early 1920's; it was the long metal pipe that allowed submarines to let air into the diesel engine when submerged a short distance from the surface!

In practice, it is a way of admiring the splendid scenarios of the cliffs and of the seabed by using mask and mouthpiece with a short pipe.

This way it is possible to breathe regularly, without having to pull your head above water, and enjoying the underwater view for a long time.

A pair of flippers helps swimming and increases your range, but they are not indispensable.

When the sea temperature is not high, a wetsuit can be useful, to stay in the water as long as possible.

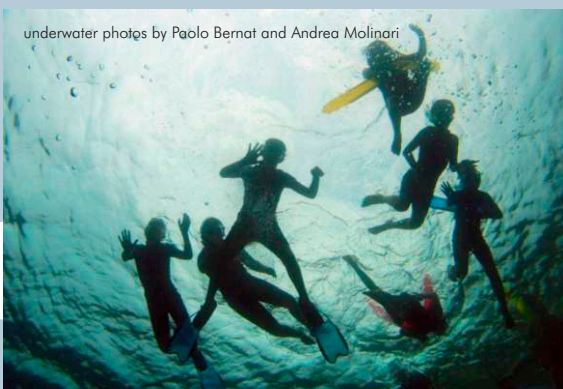
Since 2013, the Pro Loco Bergeggi (association promoting local culture and tourism) organizes guided trips that use

canoes to travel along the coast and to the island, with stopovers to admire the seabed, the flora and fauna. The trip is guided by an Environmental Guide specialized in snorkelling.

for info: Pro Loco Bergeggi - Tel. +39.019.859777 - mail: iat@prolocobergeggi.it

Naturalistic snorkeling activities, addressed to children, are also proposed by "Salto nel Blu" in collaboration with the Lega Navale in Savona, Finale Ligure and Albenga.

For info:
saltonelblu.wix.com/saltonelblu



Branches of the Lega Navale Italiana in the province of Savona



The **Lega Navale Italiana**, established in La Spezia in 1897, is a public entity that has the aim of spreading, in particular among young generations, the love for the sea, the seafaring spirit and the knowledge of the maritime problems.

The Lega Navale Italiana favours the protection of the marine environment and the protection of internal waters and organizes promotional, cultural, naturalistic, sports and educational initiatives, suited to achieving the purpose of the association: it promotes and sustains pleasure boating and other nautical activities.

For more information: www.leganavale.it

The Lega Navale Italiana branches throughout the territory are support and information points also for canoeists. These are the Savona branches sections which you can contact:

Albenga

Tel. +39.0182.542544 - albenga@leganavale.it

Albisola

Tel. +39.019.483305 - albisola@leganavale.it

Andora

Tel. +39.0182.681081 - andora@leganavale.it

Borghetto Santo Spirito

Tel. +39.0182.973389 - borghettosantospirito@leganavale.it

Ceriale

Tel. +39.0182.990809 - ceriale@leganavale.it

Finale Ligure

Tel. +39.019.600440 - finaleligure@leganavale.it

Noli

Tel. +39.019.748335 - noli@leganavale.it

Savona

Tel. +39.019.801311 - savona@leganavale.it

Spotorno

Tel. +39.019.747196 - spotorno@leganavale.it

Varazze

Tel. +39.019.95777 - varazze@leganavale.it



Guided naturalistic visits in a kayak

Edited by Cristina Puppo

Since 2012 the Associazione **Pro Loco Bergeggi**, on the initiative of an Excursion Environmental Guide, organizes **guided excursions** with a canoe to the Isola di Bergeggi.

The excursion is suited for everyone, adults and youngsters, the only requirement is knowing how to swim! Each participant is provided with a life vest. The canoes are both single and double-seaters of the “sit-on-top” type, therefore very easy to use.

While paddling you can admire the **Grotta Marina**, the “**Spiaggia degli Inglesi**”, the “**Predani**” rocks, the “**Sirens**” cave, and **Isola di Bergeggi**. Under good sea conditions there is the possibility of jumping into the water close to the island’s cliffs.

For more information and reservations:

Pro Loco Bergeggi

tel. +39.019.859777

e-mail: iat@prolocobergeggi.it



Marine establishments with kayak rental service

Many seaside resorts **rent kayaks or SUPs**, but, considering the broad offer, we recommend that you contact the individual resorts in the area of interest to check current availability.

For more information, you can find a list of establishments, with their telephone numbers and e-mail addresses, on the **Consortium Obiettivo Spiagge** website: www.obiettivospiagge.it



photo by Alessandro Beltrame



to start...

Those who would like to start paddling under the direction of an experienced paddler may contact the branches of the **Lega Navale Italiana** (see page 27) or specialized associations such as, in Savona, the **Circolo Canottieri Sabazia** (www.canottierisabaziasavona.com) and the **W.A.S. Wind and Sea** (www.windandsea.it)

Camping grounds with direct access to the beach

SAVONA

Campeggio Bagni Stella Marina - Via Nizza 107 - Tel. 019.881844

Camping Vittoria - Via Nizza 111 - Tel. +39.019.881439

CERIALE

Campeggio Delphis - Via Pineo 22 - Tel. +39.0182.990686

ALBENGA

Parco Vacanze Piccolo Paradiso - Via Che Guevara 15 - Tel. +39.0182.51734

Camping Dei Fiori - Lungomare C. Colombo - Tel. +39.0182.559257

Camping Delfino - Via Aurelia 22 - Tel. +39.0182.51998

Camping Gallinara Parco Vacanze - Via don Lasagna 40, Reg. Avarenna - Tel. +39.0182.554783

Riviera Camping Residence - Via Luigi Einaudi 100 - Tel. +39.0182.52313

Roma Parco Vacanze - Lungo Centa Croce Bianca - Tel. +39.0182.52317/555075

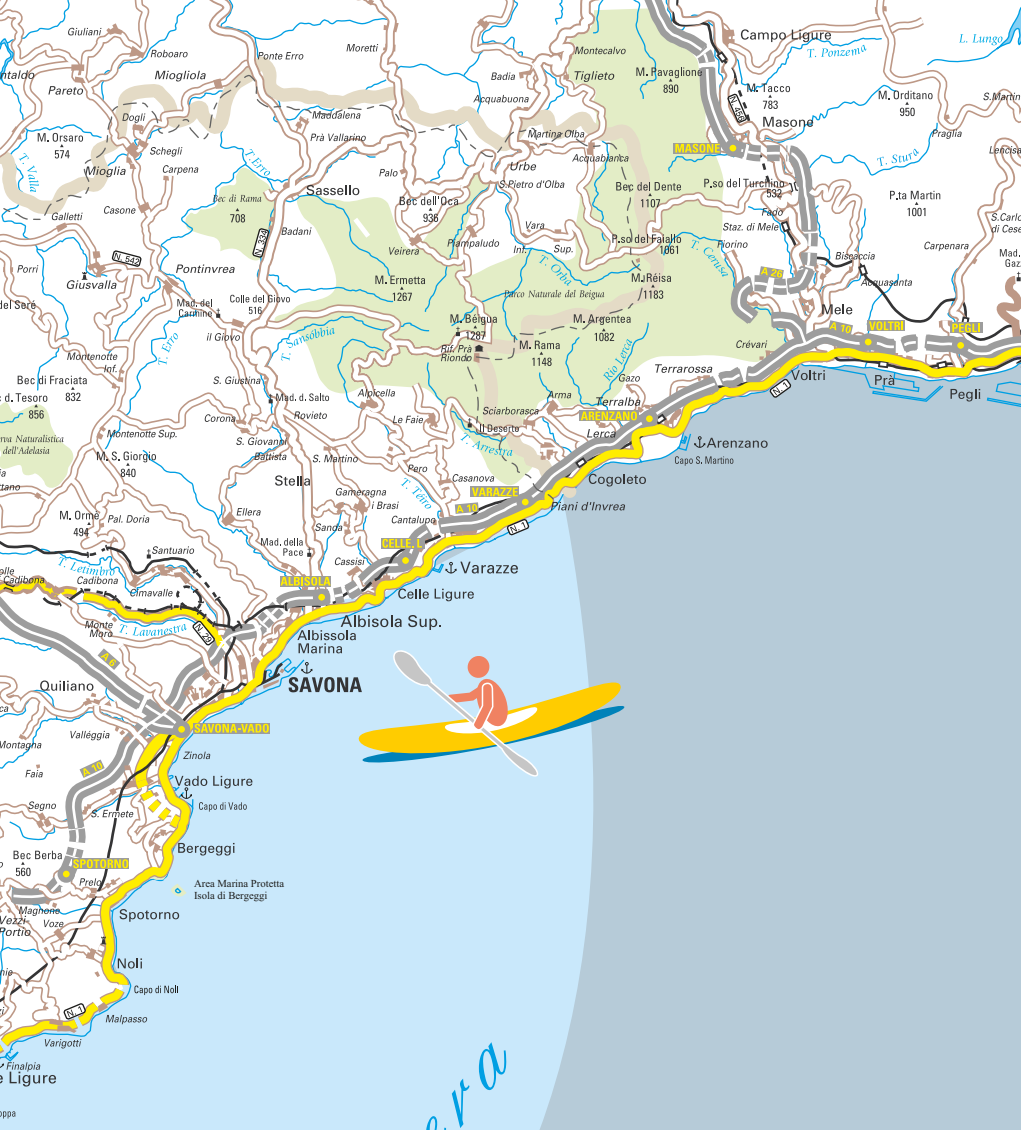
Campeggio Residence Sole - Via Michelangelo 17 - Tel. +39.0182.51957

Mauro Camping Parco Vacanze - Reg. Lionetta 10 - Tel. +39.0182.52615

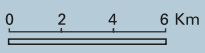
Parco Vacanze Italia - Reg. Avarenna - Tel.: +39.0182.555059







Italian Riviera





Provincia di
savona

Province of Savona

Tourist Information and Welcome Offices

Via Sormano, 12 - 17100 Savona

tel. +39.019.8313 326 - fax +39.019.8313 269

turismo@provincia.savona.it

turismo.provincia.savona.it

STL Italian Riviera - stl@provincia.savona.it

TOURIST INFORMATION AND WELCOME OFFICES

ALASSIO (17021)

Via Mazzini, 68
tel. 0182 647027
fax 0182 647874
alassio@informiviera.it

Albenga (17031)

Piazza del Popolo, 11
tel. 0182 558444
fax 0182 558740
albenga@informiviera.it

Albissola Marina (17012) seasonal

Piazza Lam
tel. 019 4002525
fax 019 4005358
albissolamarina@informiviera.it

Albisola Superiore (17011)

Piazzale Marinetti
tel. 019 4510948
fax 019 4510949
albisolasuperiore@informiviera.it

Andora (17051)

Largo Milano - Palazzo Tagliaferro
tel. 0182 681004
fax 0182 681807
andora@informiviera.it

Bardinetto (17057) seasonal

Via Roascio, 5
tel. 019 7907228
fax 019 7907228
bardinetto@informiviera.it

Bergeggi (17028) seasonal

Via Aurelia
tel. 019 859777
fax 019 859777
bergeggi@informiviera.it

Borghetto Santo Spirito (17052)

Piazza Libert , 1
tel. 0182 950784
fax 0182 950784
borghetto@informiviera.it

Borgio Verezzi (17022) seasonal

Via Matteotti, 173
tel. 019 610412
fax 019 610412
borgioverezzi@informiviera.it

Calizzano (17057) seasonal

Via S. Rosalia
tel. 019 79193
fax 019 79193
calizzano@informiviera.it

Celle Ligure (17015)

Via Boagno Palazzo Comunale
tel. 019 990021
fax 019 9999798
celleligure@informiviera.it

Ceriale (17023)

Piazza Eroi della Resistenza (lungomare)
tel. 0182 993007
fax 0182 993804
ceriale@informiviera.it

FINALE LIGURE (17024)

Via San Pietro, 14
tel. 019 681019
fax 019 681804
finaleligure@informiviera.it

Finalborgo (Finale Ligure 17024) seasonal

Piazza S. Caterina
tel. 019 680518
finalborgo@informiviera.it

Garlenda (17033)

Via Roma, 1
tel. 0182 582114
fax 0182 582114
garlenda@informiviera.it

Laigueglia (17053)

Piazza Preve, 17
tel. 0182 690059
fax 0182 691798
laigueglia@informiviera.it

LOANO (17025)

Corso Europa, 19
tel. 019 676007
fax 019 676818
loano@informiviera.it

Millesimo (17023)

Piazza Italia, 2 - Palazzo Comunale
tel. 019 564007
fax 019 564368
millesimo@informiviera.it

Noli (17026) seasonal

Corso Italia, 8
tel. 019 7499003
fax 019 7499300
noli@informiviera.it

Ortovero (17037)

Via Roma, 79
tel. 0182 547423
fax 0182 547423
ortovero@informiviera.it

Pietra Ligure (17027)

Piazza Martiri della Libert , 30
tel. 019 629003
fax 019 629790
pietraligure@informiviera.it

Sassello (17046)

Via G. B. Badano, 45
tel. 019 724020
fax 019 724020
sassello@informiviera.it

Savona (17100)

Via Maestri d'Ascia, 7r
tel. 019 8402321
fax 019 8403672
savona@informiviera.it

Spotorno (17028)

Via Aurelia, 121 - c/o Centro Congressi Palace
tel. 019 7415008
fax 019 7415811
spotorno@informiviera.it

Toirano (17055)

Piazzale Grotte
tel. 0182 989938
fax 0182 98463
toirano@informiviera.it

VARAZZE (17019)

Corso Matteotti, 56 - Palazzo Beato Jacopo
tel. 019 935043
fax 019 935916
varazze@informiviera.it

Varigotti (Finale Ligure 17024) seasonal

Via Aurelia, 79
tel. 019 698013
fax 019 6988842
varigotti@informiviera.it



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On the website turismo.provincia.savona.it you can find information about tourism, accommodations, events, publications and maps of the localities in the Province of Savona