

Day Tripping

Lerici

Sometimes we HAVE to see the sea, a big horizon, boats, blue on blue and eat some briny fresh fish. When overcome this way, we jump in the car and head for Lerici.

From Lucca to Lerici is 64 kilometers. We get off the autostrada at the Sarzana exit, wind around and up over the mountain where we get a look at the breathtaking view of Lerici, the Gulf of La Spezia, the port full of beautiful boats, the palm trees, the 13th century castle, beaches and pretty architecture. We have to be careful, though, not to drive into town, which is marked ZTL (Zona di Traffico Limitato). The public carpark above Lerici is huge, costs 10 euros a day, and from there we can either walk down to the beach or take the free air-conditioned shuttle bus (yes, even on Sunday!). The nearest free beach is just below the carpark.

Lerici is full of winding, twisting streets and alleyways that often surprise you and end up in a hidden piazza, totally invisible from the harbor front. The little shops are fun to snoop around in. Need a model ship, ravioli filled with seafood, fishing gear, a sundress, a kayak or visor? You'll find it all here, just nose around.. There is also a small botanical garden right on the waterfront, part of a long promenade really, with benches scattered about to rest on.

Lerici is full of restaurants, bars, cafés and trattorias, and we have enjoyed several of them, but we are drawn a little further down the road, about 20 minutes by foot or 3 stops on the shuttle bus. The next town, San Terenzo, is much smaller than Lerici, with its own fabulous promenade and sandy beaches and the spirits of Byron and Shelley. Our favorite spot for lunch is called *La Palmira*. We like the people. Service is attentive so you don't have to wait long for the best *penne al pescatore* around. We sometimes follow that with their good *fritto misto* or *zuppa di cozze* or ANOTHER PLATE of *penne al pescatore*. We like to drink the nice Vermentino from Luni with this.

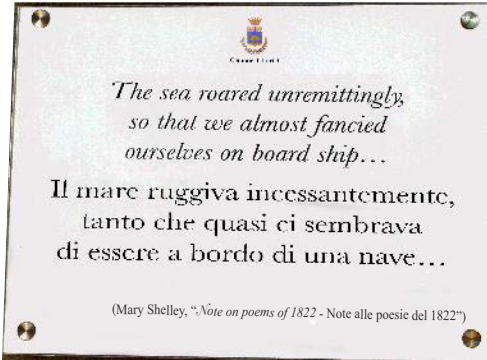


For those who prefer to eat vegan or gluten-free, near *La Palmira* is *C'era una volta*. It's a tiny restaurant where the owners prefer that you call and reserve.

Once we've savored all that great fish, said goodbye and promised "Ciao, presto!", we like to go out in the sun. Yes, even in February it's usually warm enough to sit outside and enjoy an espresso or brandy and then take a walk along the beach and watch the freighters way out on the horizon and soak up some more sun.

Sometimes we go back to Lerici, out to the castle and take the elevator up to the piazza next to it and have an overpriced coffee just to sit and delight in the view, which gets even more spectacular at the top of the castle. There are ferry boats to take you to Portovenere or the Cinque Terre.

— by Jenny Schutz



Allow about an hour to drive to Lerici from Lucca, unless you enjoy a more leisurely route, shunning the autostradas and saving money on the toll (approx. 8 euros one way from Lucca to Lerici).

Ristorante *La Palmira*, in San Terenzo, Via A. Trogu, 13. Open daily for lunch and dinner. Tel. 0187971094, canese59@gmail.com

Ristorante *C'era una volta*, also in San Terenzo, is nearby, at Piazza Cavallotti, 3. Tel. 0187 971382 or 331 5072680.

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