

# Italy's Cinque Terre to Limit Tourist Numbers

by Melissa Locker February 17, 2016 Travel and Leisure

It's about to get harder to visit Cinque Terre—but that might be a good thing.

Last year 2.5 million tourists made their way down the steep winding trails to Cinque Terre—the five picturesque fishing villages perched on the cliffs above the Mediterranean Sea.

The [centuries-old towns and their colorful buildings](#), which are on the list of [UNESCO World Heritage sites](#), have become a popular destination for cruise ships and bus tours. The impact of the booming tourist trade has transformed the picturesque backwater into crowded towns overwhelmed with tourists, and it's having a deleterious effect on the scenic Ligurian site.

Now, Italy's government has come up with a plan to slash the number of tourists by at least a million visitors in the years to come through a new ticketing system. [As The Guardian reported](#), hopeful visitors will soon have to purchase tickets to visit the historic towns in advance. The roads that lead to the villages will also be outfitted with meters to gauge the number of tourists. Once the villages reach a set number of visitors, access to Cinque Terre will be cut off.

Tourist officials have also created [an app](#) for tourists that will reveal which villages are over-crowded to hopefully direct visitors to less crowded locales.

"We will certainly be criticized for this," Vittorio Alessandro, president of the Cinque Terre National Park, told Italian newspaper *la Repubblica*. "But for us it is a question of survival."

# Will Carnival's volunteerism cruise line Fathom do good?

by [Fran Golden](#), Special for USA TODAY | Published on February 23, 2016



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At a rural school in the hills above Puerto Plata, in the Dominican Republic, 13-year-old Eliezer smiled as we together sang the words of a song designed to teach English, with lyrics such as "Hello, hello, how are you?"

Working with school kids on language skills will soon be among half-day and full-day activities available to passengers off the 700-passenger Adonia, the first ship off Carnival Corp.'s volunteerism-focused cruise line Fathom. The Adonia will visit Puerto Plata for four days/three nights on one-week cruises from Miami, starting in the spring, docking at [Carnival Corp.'s soon-to-open, \\$85 million port, Amber Cove](#). The cruises will be bi-weekly – alternate weeks the ship will be sailing to Cuba.

We sampled some of the planned Fathom activities on a recent visit to Puerto Plata. Here's what we learned.

**There's a visible goal:** Fathom officials use buzzwords like "impact travel." Being in the Puerto Plata, you can see how the region might benefit from some positive "impact." In a beautiful place with majestic hills and rugged coastline and very blue sea, 40% of the population lives below the poverty line. "You can't change the world in seven days," said Tara Russell, president of Fathom. But bringing "an army" of volunteer-focused cruise passengers each week, she said, would change people's lives.

**The team is impressive:** Officials of Fathom come from interesting backgrounds, and have impressive credentials. For instance, when asked his background, COO Kurt Kroemer shrugged and said he had worked in a lot of areas including fighting genocide and human trafficking. He was also an executive with the American Red Cross and the Make-A-Wish Foundation of America.

**There's impact training:** Activities on the ship will reinforce the volunteerism aspect. Passengers will be required to take an On-the-Ground Training Workshop. Other shipboard sessions will include storytelling. Passengers will not be required to do volunteer activities – you can instead go kitesurfing or whatever. But on a ship expected to attract a do-gooder crowd you'd probably feel like a crumb if you didn't volunteer. After the cruise, "impact outcomes" will be communicated to passengers, Russell said.

**Activities are varied:** Passengers will be able to pick and choose from a list of volunteer activities that will include helping out at Chocal, an organic chocolate factory run by a women's cooperative; planting and preparing organic fertilizer at a cacao nursery; working with kids at rural schools to help improve their English skills (small groups of passengers will be dispersed to several schools); and helping the organization Wine to Water make and distribute ceramic water filters (in a two-day program). Additional activities are in the works. Some of the "experiences" (Fathom does not use the term "shore excursion") include time at the beach.

**There's new marketing:** Fathom has a new tagline: "A different kind of cruise which combines your love of travel with your desire to make a difference," said Russell. Officials demurred when asked how many cruisers had actually booked sailings to help out in the Dominican Republic. But Russell said there had been considerable interest from corporations and churches interested in having groups onboard.

**There's excitement in the DR:** A teary Doc Hendley, founder of the Wine to Water organization, said having volunteers working every other week on the water filters project was "an amazing blessing." Distributed to local communities, the filters help prevent waterborne disease. Fathom will pay the \$50 cost for each new filter created by passengers, and more filters will be distributed as a result of the cruise line program, Hendley said. Meanwhile, a regional school administrator said she herself was hoping to improve her English thanks to Fathom passengers visiting local schools.

For a look at Amber Cove, the brand-new port where Carnival Corp. ships (including Fathom's Adonia) will dock in the Dominican Republic, click through the carousel below.

