



more famous than those of the west, the hilltop villages of these valleys are no less impressive. The most famous is Dolceacqua, home to the region's most famous wine, Rossese di Dolceacqua, and in the hills surrounding the town you'll find the vineyard of Terre Bianchi, which produces some of the finest vintages.

Dolceacqua is a town with 2,000 inhabitants. It has been occupied since the Iron Age, and consequently there are a number of historic sites in the area. The most notable is the Castello dei Doria, which occupies Dolceacqua's highest point. Built in 1151, the castle was bought by the Doria family in 1270, although it has fallen into ruin after an earthquake in 1887.

Dolceacqua is set on the River Nervia, and one of the town's most famous sites is the Ponte Vecchio, which was built in the 15th century. The bridge was made famous thanks to a painting by Monet and it's believed to be haunted by the ghost of a local girl. The bridge connects the borgo (old town) with modern Dolceacqua, and if you cross into the old quarter, you'll find a maze of winding, cobbled streets that lead to the *castello*.

One of the more unexpected treasures in the town is the 3D Visionarium. A full sensory cinema experience, this is something truly special and one of the films, *Hidden Harmonies*, reveals the four seasons in the Nervia Valley, providing a real insight into the area.

Travel further inland and you'll reach Apricale, an imposing medieval village perched precariously on a hillside. The many murals painted on the front of the village's old houses have led to it being called the »

Below: The hilltop town of Apricale, which can be seen from miles around

the onion-domed building is just one of the numerous stunning churches the city boasts, including the Chiesa S. Stefano, La Cattedrale di S. Siro and the Sanctuary of Madonna della Costa, with its frescoed interior.

Sanremo is a lush and verdant place – you'll find brightly coloured gardens and flowers everywhere, and on the waterfront, many surround the statue of Spring, which is the symbol of the city. Again, the microclimate of the riviera is in evidence at the Ormond Gardens and Nobel Villa, where many species of exotic flowers grow.

Finally, it's impossible to mention Sanremo without looking at the numerous events hosted here each year. The most notable is the Sanremo Music Festival, which was actually the inspiration for the Eurovision Song Contest. There are many other music festivals held throughout the year, as well as the Sanremo rally, the Milan-Sanremo bicycle race and a sailing regatta.

HILLTOP VILLAGES

When people think of Liguria they automatically think of the coast, and while this is an important part of the region – evidenced by the excellent seafood you can get here – inland there are just as many attractions and gems. Valle Argentina, Valle Armea, Valle Arroscia, Val Crosia, Valle Impero, Val Nervia, Val Prino and Val Roja are the valleys stretching from the coast to the border with Piedmont, and while the Cinque Terre villages in eastern Liguria may be

