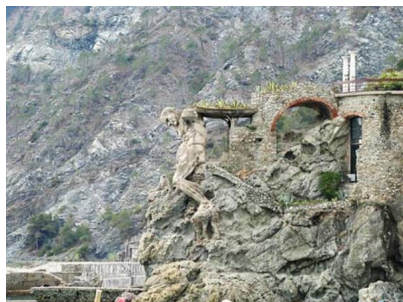


# IL GIGANTE AND THE CHARMS OF MONTEROSSO DEL MARE



The Italian picturesque town of Monterosso del Mare is a pleasant coastal resort with a romantic atmosphere. Most sought-after attraction is the statue of Neptune, or Il Gigante, which has stood the test of time and still guards over the bay.

Monterosso del Mare is probably the largest of the Cinque Terre villages in Italy. **Since its founding in early 13th century, the village functioned as a cultural and political centre of the region and its status required proper protection.** Until today, the intricate and very efficient system of fortifications prevails; these were originally built to ward off pirates. Yet another - more or less symbolic - protector dominates the bay. **Il Gigante, as locals call it, is a statue of Neptune, the Sea God, created at the beginning of 20th century as a lavish decoration of Villa Pastine.**

The Neptune was built by a Jewish Italian sculptor, Arrigo Minerbi of Ferrara in 1910. Made from concrete and iron, the giant 14-metre statue has suffered a great deal in its 100-year existence. **Monterosso del Mare was bombed during WW II and Il Gigante lost his arms, trident and a giant seashell.** Sadly, nature took its toll as well as the statue suffered further damage in the 1960s due to rough seas and strong winds. Nevertheless, Neptune is still standing strong and visitors to the Fegina Beach cannot help but admire his slightly damaged magnificence.

The village itself is a charming historical resort where visitors casually stroll around the old town and admire the 13 remaining defense towers, brightly colored houses, and striking landscape.

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