



THE WEST COAST

3 PERFECT DAYS

♥ DAY 1 // TWO WORLD HERITAGE SITES

In Porto, rise early to savour a heart-stopping panorama of Les Calanques (p94) before the crowds arrive. Back in town, sip your morning coffee on the terrace of Le Palmier (p89) for a fine view of the next venue, the little harbour's Genoese tower (p89). Lunch light, then take an afternoon boat trip to the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola (opposite). Back at base, drive to Hôtel Les Roches Rouges (p96) for a magnificent sunset view of Les Calanques from its terrace, then retreat to the restaurant for a gourmet dinner.

♥ DAY 2 // IN NAPOLÉON'S BOOTSTEPS

Memories of Napoléon abound in Ajaccio, his birthplace. Spend the morning visiting Maison Bonaparte (p102), Musée A Bandera (p102) and the resplendent Salon Napoléonien (p102). Lunch has to be in the belle époque dining room of Le Grand Café Napoléon (p104); to walk it off, drive out to Pointe de la Parata (p106) for an easy, breezy stroll along the headland. After dark, head for Le Spago (p104) for a light dinner in a contemporary setting.

♥ DAY 3 // INLAND EXERCISE

Head up and inland, where it's greener and cooler. Take the shaded, signed path into the spectacular Gorges de Spelunca (p92), which leads, via a Genoese bridge, to the village of Évisa (p91). Lunch on exclusively local produce at A Tràmula (p93) and pick up some calorie-rich snack food at the delicatessen next door. Then take the easy walking route that leads from Évisa to the Cascades d'Aitone (p92), where you can take an invigorating plunge into a freshwater pool.

TRANSPORT

See p105 for transport links from Ajaccio.

BUS // Autocars Ceccaldi (☎ 04 95 22 41 99; www.autocars-ceccaldi.com, in French) runs two buses daily between Porto and Ajaccio, calling by Piana, Cargèse and Sagone. It also connects Ajaccio with Évisa one to three times daily, and runs between Porto and Calvi daily between mid-May and September. Between July and mid-September, **Autocars Mordiconi** (☎ 04 95 48 00 04) runs one bus per day Monday to Saturday on the route between Porto and Corte via Évisa and Calacuccia.

GOLFE DE PORTO

Defined by the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola at the tip of its northern arm and the slender finger of Capu Rossu at its southern limit, the coastline of the Golfe de Porto is a tumble of steep cliffs that shelter small, enchanting coves.

PORTO

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Backed by sheer pink cliffs tumbling into a turquoise sea, Porto has a setting that's simply superb. This little holiday

town makes a great base for exploring the mountainous interior, plus the two Unesco World Heritage Sites of Les Calanques and the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola.

There's no town hall, no church, none of the usual trappings and symbols of a town. Only the stout Genoese tower recalls the days when Porto was a harbour for today's sleepy inland village of Ota.

ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

TOURIST OFFICES // Tourist office (☎ 04 95 26 10 55; www.porto-tourisme.com; place de la Marine; ☹ 9am-6pm Mon-Sat Apr & May, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun Jun-Sep, 9am-7pm Mon-Sat Oct-Mar) Sells the excellent *Hikes & Walks in the Area of Porto* (€2.50).

EXPLORING PORTO

♥ **BOAT TRIP TO THE RÉSERVE NATURELLE DE SCANDOLA // SPECTACULAR SEA-LEVEL PERSPECTIVES OF A WORLD HERITAGE SITE**

There's no vehicle access or footpath that leads into the magnificent, protected Scandola nature reserve, so the only way to get up close is by sea. Boats visit from other west-coast ports (see below)

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BY BOAT TO THE RÉSERVE NATURELLE DE SCANDOLA

Boats visit the Réserve Naturelle de Scandola from all the west-coast ports. If Porto is on your itinerary, make the sea trip from there (see above); it's the closest to this spectacular nature reserve and you have a wider choice of craft. To the north, Colombo Line boats (p66) sail from Calvi. From the south, you have several choices:

- * **Croisières Grand Bleu** (☎ 04 95 26 40 24; www.croisieresgrandbleu.com, in French; rue Marbeuf) A local company operating from Cargèse.
- * **Découvertes Naturelles** (☎ 04 95 73 12 66; www.decouvertes-naturelles.net, in French) Sailings from Ajaccio, Porticcio and Propriano.
- * **Nave Va** (☎ 04 95 28 02 66; www.naveva.com). The biggest player. Operates from Cargèse, Sagone, Ajaccio and Porticcio.