



♥ HISTORY

Multiple invasions and clans across the centuries: the turbulent history of this wild island. (p186)

♥ ALL ABOUT CORSICA

Why Corsicans are as they are. Shaped by their past, French yet not French, émigrés yet fiercely guarding their home territory. (p200)

♥ OUTDOORS

Outdoors galore! Experience the island's wild side, on land and at sea. (p206)

♥ WALKING & THE GR20

Corsica is a walker's paradise. Some of the most inspirational and iconic hiking trails in Europe are here. (p214)

♥ FLORA & FAUNA OF CORSICA

Birds and animals of maquis and mountain. And a selection of the nearly 3000 species of flora that have been identified on the island. (p220)

♥ A FRAGILE ENVIRONMENT

Threats of wildfire and unrestricted seaside development. And the Corsican organisations that work to protect Corsica's unique mountain and coastal environment. (p225)

♥ CORSICAN FLAVOURS

Sausages, hams and smoked meats, cheeses both crumbly and smooth, fish dishes and fine wines – an à la carte selection of all that's best in traditional Corsican fare. (p230)

♥ FOOD GLOSSARY

What you need to know to eat like a local: a glossary of key gastronomic words. (p238)

HISTORY

World history is generally told without reference to Corsica, except, in passing, as the place that gave birth to Emperor Napoléon Bonaparte. Even so, Corsica's history is a fascinating and turbulent one. Its strategic position long attracted the attentions of the major Mediterranean and European powers. Armies from Pisa, Genoa, France, Spain and Britain, not to mention the Moors and the forces of the Roman and Holy Roman Empires, have all fought on Corsican soil. This long history of conflict reflects another battle – the islanders' struggle to assert their identity while dominated by a succession of foreign rulers. Indeed, Corsicans have been battling for their independence ever since the Romans occupied their island, beginning in 259 BC.

NEOLITHIC CORSICA

The first inhabitants of the island probably came from what is nowadays Tuscany, the nearest place on the European mainland. They survived by hunting, gathering and fishing. You can still see rock caves of the kind in which they lived at Filitosa in the south.

'Corsicans have been battling for their independence ever since the Romans occupied their island'

Around 4000 BC the islanders, like so many early European societies, became captivated by big stones. At various sites, particularly in the southwestern corner of the island, they erected great standing slabs of stone (menhirs), and shelter-like constructions (dolmens), in which two or more standing stones support a huge, horizontal slab. At some point they began to shape and carve their menhirs, which became simple statues with carved warrior faces.

Examples of these menhirs still stand at various places across the island, including Patrimonio, where a pair flank the stage of the annual Nuits de la Guitare festival.

THE TORRÉENS

In about 1100 BC a new race, possibly originating from the eastern Mediterranean, came to the island. These new islanders have come to be known as Torrèens, named after their seemingly indestructible signature edifices, the *torri*, or towers, which stand

» 6570 BC

The skeleton of the 'Dame de Bonifacio' remains the first sure indication of human presence on Corsica

» 4000–1800 BC

Monoliths and megalithic tombs constructed by the island's inhabitants

» 565 BC

Alalia (Aléria) founded by Greeks from Phocaea in Anatolia