

INTRODUCING CORSIKA

JEAN-BERNARD CABRIET

FROM RURAL RETREATS AND
RUSTIC CUISINE TO CHIC
COASTAL RESORTS AND
STUNNING BEACHES, THE ISLAND
OF CORSICA REALLY PACKS A
PUNCH.

Take a stunningly contoured coastline, add pleated mountains, and sprinkle in attractive coastal cities and timeless hilltop villages. Next, pepper the island with historical sights, spike it with a taste-bud-teasing culinary scene and there you have Corsica, L'Île de Beauté (the Isle of Beauty).

First and foremost, get your tan. From showy Plage de Palombaggia to multipurpose Plage de Portigliolo, Corsica rolls out one fabulous beach after another. When you've had enough splashy fun, you'll find amazing things to do on dry land as well. Those mountains looming inward hold adventures all of their own, from thrilling canyoning descents to gentle walks in majestic forests. Wherever you go, opportunities for exploration abound. Drive around remote valleys to find that perfect picnic spot, or take a boat trip to discover unspoilt stretches of coastline. Food lovers will revel in trendy *paillottes* (beach restaurants) serving the freshest of fish, and in snug restaurants featuring Corsican staples. For culture buffs, prehistoric sites and heritage buildings await. It's hard to find a better combination of nature, culture and pleasure.

TOP The stunning setting of Bonifacio (p129) **BOTTOM LEFT** The awesome mountain pass of Scala di Santa Regina (p179), in the central mountains **BOTTOM RIGHT** The rocky inlets of Les Calanques (p94), Golfe de Porto



BONIFACIO



CORTE & THE CENTRAL MOUNTAINS

OLIVER CHIRTON



TOM WHEELER



GOLFE DE PORTO

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AJACCIO



CALVI & LA BALAGNE



ÎLES LAVEZZI

TOP LEFT The vibrant port of Ajaccio (p100) **TOP RIGHT** Exploring the waters of the Îles Lavezzi (p132) **BOTTOM LEFT** Calvi's impressive citadel (p59), as seen from the beach **BOTTOM CENTRE** Coastline along Cap Corse (p44) **BOTTOM RIGHT** Walking on Col de Bavella (p148), L'Alta Rocca



CAP CORSE



L'ALTA ROCCA

GETTING STARTED

CORSICA



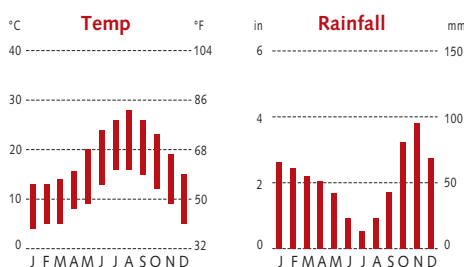
STEPHANE VICTOR

WHAT'S NEW?

- ★ A multipurpose cultural centre near Corte (p175)
- ★ Sea-kayaking trips around Campomoro (p123) and in the Golfe de Pinarello (p141)
- ★ A *parc aventure* (adventure park) in the Vallée du Cavu (p141)
- ★ A refurbished museum in the Alta Rocca (p146)
- ★ Ecofriendly *gîtes ruraux* (self-contained cottages) near Cervione (p253)
- ★ A botanical park in Île Rousse (p72)

CLIMATE: AJACCIO

Average
Max/Min



PRICE GUIDE

	BUDGET	MIDRANGE	TOP END
SLEEPING	<€60	€60-140	>€140
EATING	<€15	€15-30	>€30
ACTIVITIES	<€20	€20-50	>€50

MARK WEBSTER



OLIVER GRENON

TOP Sunrise in the Bavella area (p148) **BOTTOM LEFT** Large gorgonian, Îles Lavezzi (p132) **BOTTOM RIGHT** Picturesque Bonifacio (p129) **FAR RIGHT** Walking the GR20 (p214)

ACCOMMODATION

One of the best features of Corsican tourism is the variety of accommodation options on offer, from rustic *gîtes d'étape* (walkers' lodges) and charming *chambres d'hôtes* (B&Bs) to swish hotels and sophisticated villas. A key factor to consider is the wild difference in price between the high season (July and August) and the rest of the year; during the peak months prices can be jacked up by 100%. Also note that the interior of the island is cheaper than the coast, but options are less varied. For more on accommodation, see p240.

MAIN POINTS OF ENTRY

CAMPO DELL'ORO AIRPORT (AJA; www.ajaccio.aeroport.fr) Ajaccio's airport serves the west. It's 8km from the centre of town.

BASTIA PORETTA AIRPORT (BIA; www.bastia.aeroport.fr) The island's second-most important airport after Ajaccio. Located near Bastia, it's convenient for Cap Corse, St-Florent and eastern Corsica.

FIGARI SUD CORSE AIRPORT (www.figari.aeroport.fr) Located about 20km from Bonifacio and Porto-Vecchio, it's also convenient for Propriano and southern Corsica.

THINGS TO TAKE

- ★ Detailed road maps to tackle those nerve-racking hinterland roads; see p262
- ★ Driving licence, car documents and car insurance
- ★ Lonely Planet's *French* phrasebook
- ★ Walking shoes for the island's oh-so-tempting trails
- ★ A set of smart-casual clothes for that special candlelit dinner



STEFANO UCCIONI

WEBLINKS

L'AGENCE DU TOURISME DE LA CORSE (www.visit-corsica.com) The official tourist-board site.

ALLER EN CORSE (www.allerencorse.com) Accommodation listings and practical information.

PARC NATUREL RÉGIONAL (www.parc-naturel-corse.com) Information on walking.

CORSICA ISULA (www.corsica-isula.com) An exhaustive English-language website.

FESTIVALS & EVENTS

CORSICA

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MARCH/APRIL

PROCESSIONS DE LA SEMAINE SAINTE

Easter celebrations include La Cerca (p45) in Erbalunga, U Catenacciu (p125) in Sartène, La Granitola in Calvi and the procession of the Five Orders in Bonifacio.

A MERENDELLA IN CASTAGNICCIA

PIEDICROCE

Festival celebrating regional cuisine; held over the Easter weekend (p159).

MAY/JUNE

FESTIMARE

ÎLE ROUSSE

Celebrates the sea with plenty of fish and seafood specials, plus various amusements. Held late May or early June.

ST-ÉRASME

AJACCIO, BASTIA, CALVI

Nautically themed festivities, boat rides and fishing-boat blessings honour the patron saint of fishermen on 2 June.

FIERA DI U MARE

SOLENZARA

This sea festival held in mid-June features sailing races and seafood-cooking competitions.

CALVI JAZZ FESTIVAL

CALVI

Concerts and jam sessions featuring big names from the international jazz scene take place in late June.

JULY

A NOTTE DI A MEMORIA

BASTIA

A historical re-enactment of the Genoese governor's arrival is held in the citadel; occurs in early July.

NUITS DE LA GUITARE

PATRIMONIO

One of Europe's largest guitar festivals is held in the Nebbio around mid-July (p56).

CALVI ON THE ROCKS

CALVI

Three days of electronic and experimental music; held in mid-July.

TOP Drummers marching through Ajaccio **RIGHT** Procession at the Santa di u Niolo (p180), Casamaccioli

AUGUST

PÈLERINAGE DE NOTRE-DAME-DES-NEIGES

BAVELLA

This pilgrimage to the miracle-working Madonna on Col de Bavella on 5 August draws massive crowds.

FÊTES NAPOLÉONIENNES

AJACCIO

This hugely popular festival celebrating Napoléon's birthday is held in mid-August, and features fireworks, parades and various amusements.

SEPTEMBER

SANTA DI U NIOLO

CASAMACCIOLI

Thousands of pilgrims celebrate the Nativity of the Virgin around 8 September (p180).

RENCONTRES DE CHANTS POLYPHONIQUES

CALVI

Festival of polyphonic singing held at various venues in the citadel. Takes place in mid-September.

TOUR DE CORSE CYCLISTE

A four-day cycling race around the island.

OCTOBER

FESTIVENTU

CALVI

This festival celebrates the role of the wind with hundreds of kites on the beach. It's held in late October.

LES MUSICALES DE BASTIA

BASTIA

Jazz, classical music, dance and theatrical performances.

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CULTURE

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CHURCHES

CATHÉDRALE ST-ÉRASME

One of Corsica's earliest baroque churches, this has a magnificent organ (p151).

ÉGLISE ST-JEAN BAPTISTE

The most refined example of a baroque church in Corsica (p160).

ÉGLISE STE-MARGUERITE

A landmark in the Castagniccia due to its bell tower and baroque stucco ornamentation (p160).

ÉGLISE ST-DOMINIQUE

A rare example of a Gothic church in Corsica (p131).

CHAPEL OF SAN NICOLAO

In the Boziu, this little Romanesque chapel has magnificent frescos (p181).

ÉGLISE DE SAN MICHELE DE MURATO With its distinctive two-colour banding, this is the most gorgeous Pisan church in Corsica (p57).

ROMANESQUE TO BAROQUE

Possibly the most appealing curiosities on the island's architectural landscape are the delightful 9th- to 11th-century Pisan Romanesque churches of the northwest. Only about 10 survive. Common features are easily discerned: the sober structure of a single nave and no transept; the square-based bell tower; and the typically Tuscan two-tone banding. The most striking Romanesque churches are the Église de San Michele de Murato (p57), and the Cathédrale de la Canonica, south of Bastia. Later came the Genoese, who introduced baroque-style architecture to the island. The most stunning baroque churches can be seen in La Castagniccia; a particularly notable example is in La Porta (p160). The churches all feature splendid church organs and sumptuously decorated interiors, forming a striking contrast to the surrounding landscapes. See p203 for more on religious architecture.



TOP Église de San Michele de Murato (p57), near Murato **BOTTOM** Shopping in Bonifacio (p129) **RIGHT** Out and about on rue Clemenceau, Calvi (p59) **FAR RIGHT** Église St-Jean Baptiste (p38), Bastia

TOP MUSEUMS

MUSÉE FESCH France's second-largest collection of Italian paintings. Undergoing renovations at research time (p100).

MAISON BONAPARTE This 19th-century house was Napoléon's birthplace (p102).

MUSÉE DE L'ALTA ROCCA A good introduction to prehistoric Corsica (p146).

MUSÉE DE LA CORSE The most comprehensive museum on the island (p169).

MAISON NATALE DE PASCAL PAOLI Offers an insight into the life of the 'Father of the Land' (p161).

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OLIVIER GRENON

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Easter celebrations – Corsica's Easter processions are highly colourful (p10)
- ★ Polyphonic chants – The most famous choirs hold performances in churches in summer
- ★ Fresco hunting – Chapels and churches boast some hidden gems
- ★ Buying artisan crafts – The workshops at Pigna are well worth the detour (p78)
- ★ Treasure hunts – Approach locals to solve riddles about Corte's illustrious past (p175)
- ★ Art galleries – Investigate Calvi's showrooms, galleries and workshops (p67)
- ★ Knife making – See master craftspeople fashioning traditional knives (p147)

DOS & DON'TS

- ★ Wear bathing suits on the beach, never in towns or villages
- ★ Don't wear flip-flops or T-shirts in restaurants, cafes or clubs
- ★ Avoid meddling with local politics or criticising the nationalist movements
- ★ Keep your temper – don't use the horn if drivers block the road just to talk
- ★ Be courteous – say '*Bonjour Madame*' or '*Bonjour Monsieur*'

CULTURE

CORSICA



PREHISTORY

FILITOSA Impressive statues shrouded in mystery (p117).

PIANU DI LEVIE Well-preserved megalithic remains amid an eerie wood (p146).

CAURIA Menhirs and dolmens galore (p126)!

CASTELLU D'ARAGGIO A small complex hidden in the hills (p142).

MUSÉE DE L'ALTA ROCCA Recently upgraded museum that does a good job explaining the island's prehistory and culture (p146).

POLYPHONIC MUSIC

Corsica's unique polyphonic singing is the voice of the island's soul.

A FILETTA (www.afiletta.com) One of Corsica's polyphonic flagships.

JP POLETTI & LES CHOEURS DE SARTÈNE Famous for their gut-wrenching *lamenti* (laments).

JACKY MICAELLI (www.jackymicaelli.com) Considered the best living female vocalist in Corsica.

TAVAGNA (www.tavagna.com) A group that's stayed true to its roots.

I MUVRINI (www.muvrini.com) The stars of Corsican music combine polyphonic vocals with modern instruments.

THE GENOESE LEGACY

Somewhere or other you'll have seen that classic photo of a stately Genoese tower silhouetted on a rocky promontory at sunset. Around 60 of these iconic fortified structures punctuate the coastline, a reminder of centuries of Genoese presence on the island. Dating from the 16th century, they stand today in various states of repair; some of them, such as the Tour de Campomoro (p122), have been wonderfully restored, while others are crumbling away. The most impressive of these stunning structures are to be found around Cap Corse, but southern Corsica and the west coast also boast some superb examples. See p46 for more information.

TOP Menhir statues, Filitosa (p117) **RIGHT** Corsica contains numerous villages dotted throughout the countryside

SONS OF CORSICA

A great soldier, Sampiero Corso (1498–1567; p191) became known as ‘the most Corsican of Corsicans’ and fought with French forces against the Genoese occupiers. He secured control of most of the island in 1564, but was finally defeated in a typical Corsican blood feud after he strangled his wife. Pascal Paoli (p193), Corsica’s revolutionary leader, headed Corsica during its short period of independence between 1755 and 1769; Corsicans call him the Babbu di a Patria (Father of the Land). He gave Corsica a democratic constitution that inspired that of the United States of America. Though he was Corsica’s most famous son, Napoléon (1769–1821; p196) had ambivalent feelings about his homeland and paid scant attention to Corsica during his period of power.

HILLTOP VILLAGES

Traditional Corsican culture can be explored in hamlets scattered through the countless valleys and spurs that slice up the island’s dramatic scenery.

- ★ Deep in the Alta Rocca, Zonza is blessed with a fabulous backdrop – the awesome Aiguilles de Bavella (p144).
- ★ Lama is a fairy-tale hamlet with fine mansions and Italianate palazzi (p79).
- ★ Cap Corse’s prettiest village, Nonza, clings to the flanks of a rocky pinnacle (p48).
- ★ The splendidly isolated hamlet of Tralonca, in Le Boziu, is served by twisting mountain roads (p181).



FOOD & DRINK

CORSICA

LOCAL PRODUCE

CHARCUTERIE Corsica is famous for its flavoursome cured meats, made from free-range pigs that feed on chestnuts.

CHEESE The island has cheese-making down to a fine art.

OLIVE OIL La Balagne and L'Alta Rocca produce extremely aromatic olive oils.

HONEY Corsican honey is produced from bees that feed exclusively on the wildflowers of the maquis.

WINES & LIQUEURS Corsica has nine Appellation d'Origine Contrôlée (AOC) wines and countless fruit liqueurs.

SEAFOOD Lobster, oysters, squid, sea bass, mussels... Corsica has them all.



JAN-BERNARD CALLETT

CHARCUTERIE

In Corsica, charcuterie has been elevated to an art form. Connoisseurs swear by the *porcu nustrale*, the Corsican pig breed also known as *porcu neru* (black pig); the finest Corsican charcuterie derives its flavour from the pigs' diet of acorns and chestnuts. Wherever you go, you'll find a wide array of cured meats on offer. The most sought-after produce is *prisuttu* (dry ham), which has an unforgettable hazelnut taste. *Lonzu* (tender smoked fillet), cut into thin slices, makes for a wonderful appetiser, while *salamu* (salami-style sausage) is perfect picnic fodder. *Coppa* (shoulder) has a bit more fat than *lonzu* but tastes equally good. In winter, *figatellu* (liver sausage) is eaten grilled. And let's not forget *terrinerie de sanglier* (wild-boar pâté), usually flavoured with myrtle. Charcuterie can be purchased in speciality shops; see p231 for more information. *Buon appetitu!*



OLIVIERO TOSCANI

TOP Meat cooking on an open fire **BOTTOM** Cured meat **RIGHT** Corsica supports a thriving fishing industry **FAR RIGHT** Fresh seafood

TOP INNS

U FRAGNU The specialities at this atmospheric inn couldn't be more Corsican (p181).

A MANDRIA DE SÉBASTIEN Traditional Corsican cuisine in a chic rustic cottage (p167).

LE MOULIN FARELLACCI A gargantuan Corsican menu and fantastic Corsican music (p118).

A PIGNATA A scrumptious seven-course meal and million-dollar views (p147).

U TARAVU Home-cured charcuterie and local cheeses are a taste-bud feast (p110).



MONSIEUR JUBIATO



OLIVIER GRENON

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Purchasing local products – Stock up on cheese, charcuterie and jams
- ★ Splurging in an *auberge* – Devour traditional dishes at a local inn
- ★ Sampling seafood – Taste a bounteous range of marine offerings at a seafood restaurant
- ★ A meal in a *paillotte* – Lunch at a sand-in-your-toes beach restaurant
- ★ Wine tasting – Tour the best Corsican domaines to find that perfect rosé
- ★ Food fairs – Mingle with local farmers at a country fair

PRODUCE SHOPS

L'ORRIU Porto-Vecchio institution selling top-quality local specialities (p138).

TEMPI FA Jams, wine, cheese and charcuterie in trendy surroundings (p122).

PÂTISSERIE CASANOVA An irresistible selection of Corsican sweets and desserts (p176).

U MUNTAGNOLU Huge range of high-quality Corsican goodies (p43).

TERRA CORSA Fine charcuterie and homemade ewe's-milk cheeses (p98).

FOOD & DRINK

CORSICA



JAN-BERNARD CALLET

WEBLINKS

CORSICAN WINES (www.vinsdecorse.com) Comprehensive site on local wines, with full information on wine estates.

CHEESE (www.fromages-corse.org) All about Corsican cheeses and the Fiera di u Casgiu food fair.

TERROIRS DE CORSE (www.corsica-terroirs.com) Information on Corsican specialities, with themed hinterland itineraries.

CORSICAN PRODUCTS (www.casa-corsa.fr) A one-stop shop for Corsican products.

CHARCUTERIE (www.u-porcu-neru.com) Everything about charcuterie, plus pictures.

FOOD FAIRS

Food and wine are celebrated throughout Corsica at rural fairs.

FESTA DI L'OLIU NOVU Ste-Lucie de Tal-lano's olive-oil festival in mid-March (p148).

FIERA DI A CASTAGNA Honours the chestnut; held in mid-December in Bocognano, near Vizzavona.

FIERA DI U CASGIU Celebrates cheese; takes place in early May in Venaco.

FIERA DI U VINU A wine fair held in early July in Luri (p50).

FOIRE DU COL DE PRATO Lively agricultural fair in July (p161).

CORSICAN WINES: A SUCCESS STORY

How things have changed. Fifteen years ago, Corsican wines did not have a good reputation, but now it's a completely different story. Using modern vinification methods, the younger generation of winemakers have raised the standard of Corsican wine, resulting in a number of domaines, such as Domaine Torracchia (p142) and Domaine Leccia (p56), gaining international recognition. One of the great pleasures of touring the regions of Corsica is tasting your way through them. There are no established wine routes, but there are nine AOC regions you can visit. Most domaines offer wine tasting. See p235 for more information.

TOP The popular meat treat, charcuterie (p231), is found everywhere on the island **RIGHT** Heaven for food and wine lovers

CHEESE

Gourmands will delight in all the flavours and textures of Corsican cheeses, from hard, tangy *tomme corse* (semihard ewe's-milk cheese) to a soft Niolincu and the star of all Corsican cheeses, the Brocciu (fresh ewe's or goat's cheese). Brocciu is produced from December to June only. It can be eaten fresh or aged; stuffed into eggplants, cannelloni, and omelettes with mint; or baked in a *fiadone* cheesecake. For the bravest connoisseurs or the truly adventurous, the *casgiu merzu* is, quite literally, a 'rotten cheese' alive with maggots! Believe us, it will linger long on the palate.

SWEET TREATS

Ice creams, tarts, cakes and biscuits – Corsica's dessert menu is sure to tempt you.

- ★ *Canistrelli* – Devilish biscuits made with almonds, walnuts, lemon or aniseed
- ★ *Frappe* – Look and taste like little fritters; made from chestnut flour
- ★ Honey – The most fragrant is the *miel de maquis* from the Vallée de l'Asco
- ★ *Falculelli* – Frittered Brocciu cheese served on a chestnut leaf
- ★ *Fiadone* – A light flan made with cheese, lemon and eggs
- ★ Ice cream – Original flavours such as myrtle, Brocciu or chestnut

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OUTDOORS

CORSICA

BOOKS

À TRAVERS LA MONTAGNE CORSE (FFRP)
The reference guide for the GR20.

BALADES NATURE EN CORSE (Dakota Editions)
Describes 26 short walks. Includes maps and illustrations.

CORSE CANYONS (Franck Jourdan) Has descriptions and reviews of the top canyons.

FALAISES DE CORSE (Thierry Souchard) A reference guide for rock climbing, with information on the best routes.

GR20 – CORSICA: THE HIGH-LEVEL ROUTE (Paddy Dillon) Another reliable guide on the GR20.

LES PLUS BELLES PLONGÉES DE CORSE (Georges Antoni) Good all-round resource for divers. Includes a DVD.



JEAN-BERNARD CAULLET

ON LAND

The rugged terrain of this little-populated island really does beg to be hiked, biked, skied, climbed and otherwise actively pursued. The number-one reason to come to Corsica is to get off the roads and into the wild – on foot. Some of the most inspirational hiking trails in Europe are to be found here, from the challenging GR20 to gentle afternoon strolls in the forests and coastal ambles (p214). Canyoning and rock climbing are also well established. But you needn't be limited to your own two feet: try a four-legged creature or see it all from above from a rope slide! These activities have one thing in common: all pass through scenery of bewildering beauty. Good news: you don't need previous experience. Numerous outfits have developed an impressive infrastructure all over Corsica and run programs for beginners. See p206 for more information.



JEAN-BERNARD CAULLET

TOP Get a grip while rock climbing (p213) **BOTTOM** Horse riding (p212) on the beach **RIGHT** Your trip to Corsica is incomplete without doing at least one walk (p214) **FAR RIGHT** An inviting spot for a swim

TOP SHORT WALKS

LE TOUR DE SÉNÈQUE Provides a spectacular panorama over Cap Corse (p50).

CAPU ROSSU This slim promontory has stunning views of the Golfe de Porto (p95).

LE SENTIER MULETIER A glorious panorama of Les Calanques from a historic track that few visitors tread (p95).

PLATEAU DU COSCIONE This plateau is reminiscent of Mongolian steppes (p145).

LAC DE MELU & LAC DE CAPITELLU Unforgettable alpine scenery, with two postcard-perfect glacial lakes (p178).



JEAN-BENOÎT GARLET

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DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ Exploring the coastline – Rent a sea kayak or take a guided trip in the Golfe du Valinco (p123)

- ★ Walking – Combine walking, picnicking and taking a dip in the Vallée du Tavignano (p175)

- ★ Taking the plunge – The crystal-clear waters off Îles Lavezzi are an ideal place to learn to dive (p131)

- ★ Playing Tarzan – Glide along cables strung over the Asco river (p180)

- ★ Canyon descents – Plunge down water-polished chutes in the Canyon de la Vacca (p148)

- ★ Horse riding – Gallop along Plage de Caterag-gio (p140)

SPECIALISTS

IN TERRA CORSA (www.interracorsa.fr) Covers activities in central Corsica.

CORS' AVENTURE (www.cors-aventure.com) A well-established operator. Offers climbing, walking, sea kayaking, rafting and canyoning.

ALTIPIANI (www.altipiani-corse.com) Mountain biking, canyoning, walking and rock climbing near Corte.

OBJECTIF NATURE (www.objectif-nature-corse.com) Sea and land activities in northern Corsica.

COULEUR CORSE (www.couleur-corse.com) Can organise all types of activities.

OUTDOORS

CORSICA



JEAN-BENOÎT CALLET

WEBLINKS

GR20 (www.le-gr20.com/gb) Comprehensive site on the iconic GR20. Includes info on accommodation, wildlife, equipment and the 16 stages.

CANYONING (www.descente-canyon.com) The low-down on the world's best canyons, with a selection of 69 in Corsica.

ROCK CLIMBING (<http://escalade.corse.topo.free.fr>) Reviews of climbing routes, plus a forum.

VIA FERRATA (www.laviaferrata.net) Has a few pages on Corsica.

SURFING (www.surfing-corsica.fr) All about surfing, including weather forecast and photo galleries.

KAYAKING EXCURSIONS

Guided sea-kayaking trips offer a turtle's-eye view of the coastline.

CORSICAVENTURA (www.emella.net) Trips on Etang d'Urbino and Tavignano river.

BONIF KAYAK (www.bonifacio-kayak.com) Around Îles Lavezzi and Bonifacio.

SPORTSICA (☎ 06 24 26 51 83) Excursions around the Golfe de Pinarello.

SUD KAYAK (☎ 06 14 11 68 82) Trips on the Baie de Campomoro.

CLUB NAUTIQUE D'ÎLE ROUSSE (www.cnir.org) Around Île de la Pietra and its islets.

DELTA DU FANGU (www.delta-du-fangu.com) Around the Delta du Fangu.

PARCS AVENTURE MADNESS

Fun and accessible to just about anybody, *parcs aventure* are very popular in Corsica. It's an easy way to get a buzz – the only training you need is a 10-minute lesson – and the whole family can take part at the same time. You're still safe though, as the *parcs* are supervised by qualified instructors. There are lots of different fixtures to keep you excited, including zip lines that will make your heart skip a beat – some of them exceed 250m in length! Another draw is the scenery: *parcs aventure* are set up in the most scenic parts of the island. See p212 for more information.

TOP Corsica's windy coastline is popular for windsurfing (p209) **RIGHT** Canyoning (p210) – the ultimate thrill-seeker activity

AT SEA

With so much water surrounding Corsica, your vacation here is sure to be a dream. Even if you've never dived, snorkelled, sailed, windsurfed or paddled, this is a great place to try these activities: experienced outfitters employ qualified, English-speaking instructors, and cater to all with affordable instruction, convenience and availability. With water temperatures hovering around 24°C in summer and an average of 2800 hours of sunshine each year, you're almost guaranteed the perfect weather for any activity. The western and southern coastlines, especially in the water-sports hubs of Porto, Sagone, Bonifacio, Porto-Vecchio and Propriano, deliver all the goods. To beat the crowds, try kayaking – it's a great way to reach hidden coves and secluded beaches.

SCENIC ROADS

If your legs are twitching, there are kilometres of heart-stopping rides (or drives) along ribbon-thin roads.

- ★ The D80, from Patrimonio to Pino (p48) – In the Cap Corse
- ★ The D81B, from Calvi to Galéria and Porto (p70) – Fantastic views of the sea
- ★ The D268, from Solenzara to Col de Bavella (p166) – Dramatic mountain road
- ★ The D69, from Aullène to Col de la Vaccia (p109)
- ★ The D330, from Cervione to San Nicolao (p156) – Superb views of the coastal plain



FAMILY TRAVEL

CORSICA

TOP BEACHES

PLAGE DE PINARELLO Safe, shallow and reassuring, with numerous restaurants nearby (p141).

PLAGE DE RONDINARA A broad white-sand beach shielded from the winds (p133).

PLAGE D'ARONE Children love this delightful crescent of fine sand – hire a pedal boat for maximum effect (p96).

PLAGE DE PORTIGLIOLO A vast expanse of silky sand, with lots of activities available for kids (p119).

DON'T MISS EXPERIENCES

- ★ *Parcs aventure* – Swing Tarzan-style through the trees at a 'baby *parc*' (p141)

- ★ Donkey rides – Feel like an explorer in the maquis (p120)

- ★ Kayak excursions – Paddle around the Golfe de Pinarello in a 'tri-yak' with Mum and Dad (p141)

- ★ Introductory dives – Kids aged eight and over can take the plunge (p117)

- ★ Sailing – Learn the ropes with a qualified instructor (p121)

- ★ *Calèche* ride – Clip-clop between beaches in a horse-drawn carriage (p54)

TRAVEL WITH CHILDREN

Corsica is an excellent place to explore with kids: there are no major health concerns, the climate is good and the food is easy to navigate (bar some pungent cheeses, perhaps!). There's much to see and do to keep kids happy, from supervised beaches to boat excursions and outdoor adventures. Most outdoor-activity outfits – equestrian centres, dive centres, *parcs aventure*, nautical centres etc – have special gear, pricing and activity options for kids. Except the very urban Bastia area, which lacks family-friendly activities and accommodation, all regions are good bases for families. That said, travelling with kids in Corsica does present a few minor problems; most notably, long rides might bore the little ones. Keep this in mind when planning your itinerary.

TOP Kids of all ages will love Corsica's many *parcs aventure* (p212)

THE AUTHORS



JEAN-BERNARD CARILLET

Coordinating Author, the South, the Central Mountains

Paris-based journalist and photographer Jean-Bernard has written extensively about Corsica. An incorrigible foodie, he confesses a penchant for the robust Corsican cuisine – nothing tastes better than charcuterie enjoyed riverside in a remote valley. When not looking for that perfect picnic spot, he tours the hinterland in search of atmospheric B&Bs, burns off the calories by meandering along hiking trails or diving the Med, and attends the island's cultural festivals.



MILES RODDIS

Calvi & La Balagne, the West Coast

Miles lives beside the Mediterranean in Valencia, Spain. He's hiked the island of Mallorca for Lonely Planet's *Walking in Spain*, explored the island of Elba for the *Italy* guide, and lazed on the beaches of Sardinia for sheer fun. He's authored more than 30 Lonely Planet titles, including *France*, *Brittany & Normandy*, *Languedoc-Roussillon* and *Walking in France*. This is the second time he's married these two areas of interest by exploring Corsica – Mediterranean and French, yet not completely French.

LONELY PLANET AUTHORS

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NEIL WILSON

Bastia & the Far North, the East

After working as a petroleum-industry geologist for several years, Neil gave up the rock business to be a freelance writer and photographer. Since 1988 he has travelled in five continents and written around 55 guidebooks for various publishers. He has travelled extensively in France, visiting annually for the last 15 years, and has worked on Lonely Planet's *France* and *Brittany* guidebooks. Born in Glasgow, Neil defected east at the age of 18 and has lived in Edinburgh ever since.



ITINERARIES

THE NORTH'S RICHES

FIVE DAYS // BASTIA TO PATRIMONIO // 130KM

From **Bastia** (p38) motor north to the Cap Corse. After visiting the little harbour at **Erbalunga** (p45), continue to **Macinaggio** (p46), from where you can take a boat trip past the **Îles Finocchiarola** (p46). Next morning, hike along the **Sentier des Douaniers** (p46)



coastal trail as far as **Barcaggio** (p46). Back at the wheel, forge west to **Centuri** (p48) and savour lobster at **Auberge du Pêcheur** (p48). Suitably re-energised, drive the spectacular **D80** (p48) south to **Nonza** (p48), where you can bed down at **Casa Maria** (p242). On day three, enjoy the sophisticated atmosphere of **St-Florent** (p50), then spend the next day working your tan on idyllic **Plage du Loto** (p54). The last day is all about epicurean indulgences – drop into **Patrimonio** (p55) and discover the fine wines of Le Nebbio.

CORSICA'S HEART & SOUL

ONE WEEK // CORTE TO VIZZAVONA // 240KM

Corte (p169) is ideally positioned for exploring the valleys and microregions of central Corsica. Spend your first day taking in Corte's sights. The next day, set the alarm early because you've got a big day in the little-tramped **Vallée du Niolo** (p179). The **Vallée de la Restonica** (p177) is the place to go on day three. Keep your fourth day for the mysterious **Boziu** (p181) then, on your fifth day, give the car a rest and picnic in the traffic-free **Vallée du Tavignano** (p175). On day six, drag yourself away from Corte and make your way to **Venaco** (p183) – be sure to lunch at a **A Cantina di Matteu** (p184). End the week with a day of gentle walking amid the majestic **Forêt de Vizzavona** (p184).



WESTERN DELIGHTS

TWO WEEKS // CALVI TO AJACCIO // 450KM

Calvi (p59) and the hilltop villages of **La Balagne** (p75) are worth at least three days. Then brace yourself for the hold-on-to-your-hat coastal drive south to **Porto** (p83), via **Galéria** (p71). Why not break the journey with a hike to **Girolata** (p91), one of the jewels of this wild coastline? The Porto area has plenty to keep you busy for a good three days. Next, move on to **Ajaccio** (p100) via **Cargèse** (p97) and **Sagone** (p98), allowing three days for Corsica's largest town and its gulf. Finally, duck inland and explore the **Haut Taravo** (p109) and the **Vallée du Prunelli** (p107) – you should plan on three days to do them proper justice.



BEACHSIDE FROLICS

12 DAYS // PORTO-VECCHIO TO PROPRIANO // 280KM

Southern Corsica offers copious versions of the perfect beach. **Porto-Vecchio** (p134) is a good place to start; plan on four days to make the most of the various options in the area, including **Plage de Palombaggia** (p139) and the **Golfe de Pinarello** (p141). Journey on to **Bonifacio** (p129), which is a great base for exploring the **Îles Lavezzi** (p132) and the **Golfe de Sant' Amanza** (p132) – you'll need three days, minimum. Spare a day for **Tizzano** (p127), where you can rent a boat and find your own pocket of sand. In **Propriano** (p119), allow another four days for the fantastic Golfe du Valinco – be sure to squeeze in the charming seaside towns of **Porto Pollo** (p116) and **Campomoro** (p122).



L'ALTA ROCCA ESCAPE

FIVE DAYS // PORTO-VECCHIO TO LEVIE // 120KM

From Porto-Vecchio, take the twisting D368 to **L'Ospédale** (p143), the gateway to L'Alta Rocca. After soaking up the atmosphere of the **Forêt de L'Ospédale** (p143), head to **Zonza** (p144), which has accommodation options and restaurants. Spend the



next day canyoning (or just marvelling at the fabulous scenery) in the **Bavella area** (p148) and recharge the batteries with a hearty dinner at **Chez Pierrot** (p145) near Zonza. Next morning, explore the Mongolian-like **Plateau du Coscione** (p145) before driving to **Ste-Lucie de Tallano** (p147). On your fourth day, mosey around the village and shop for the perfect olive oil. Keep your fifth day for **Levie** (p146) and the **Cucuruzzu & Capula archaeological sites** (p146). Be sure to pause for lunch or dinner at **A Pignata** (p147) in Levie.

HILLTOP VILLAGES ORGY

ONE WEEK // BASTIA TO SOLENZARA // 260KM

Head due south from **Bastia** (p38), following the N198, before steering inland for a scenic drive around the hilltop villages of the **Morianincu** (p157). Follow the **Corniche de la Castagniccia** (p156) to **Cervione** (p151), where **Casa Corsa – Chambres d'Hôtes Doumens** (p253) provides a peaceful night's sleep. Meander north through the Castagniccia, stopping at the atmosphere-laden villages of **La Porta** (p160) and **Morosaglia** (p161); plan on spending two days here. Back on the coastal road, feast on seafood at **Étang de Diane** (p163) before exploring the **Fiumorbu** (p164) – two days in this supremely picturesque microregion should fit the bill. Spend the next day picnicking in the remote **Vallée du Travo** (p166), before lazing a couple of days away on the beach at **Solenzara** (p165).



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