



# CALVI & LA BALAGNE

## 3 PERFECT DAYS

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### ♥ DAY 1 // EXPLORING CALVI

Get your beach work in early, before the sun gets too intense. Then explore Calvi's citadel (opposite) for stunning seascapes and views as well as for the history. After lunching lightly, drive to the chapel of Notre Dame de la Serra (p66) for a magnificent bird's-eye view of Calvi or walk out along Pointe de la Revellata (p66). In the early evening, window-shop in the old quarter, then stroll along the short length of quai Landry (p65) at sunset. End the day with dinner in a restaurant (p68) in the same small historical area.

### ♥ DAY 2 // ÎLE ROUSSE & AROUND

Spend the cooler part of the morning exploring the Parc de Saleccia (p72). Enjoy an early lunch at the splendid Michelin-starred Restaurant Pasquale Paoli (p75), then head inland to explore the Balagne villages of Pigna (p78) and Sant'Antonino (p81), allowing at least an hour for each. Returning, take in the agreeably eccentric Musée de Corbara (p78; note those restricted entry hours!). Back in Île Rousse, sip an aperitif on the terrace of venerable Café des Platanes (p73), wind down and watch the world drift by.

### ♥ DAY 3 // A COASTAL ESCAPE

Follow the spectacular, lightly travelled D81B coastal road (p70) southward from Calvi. At Argentella (p71) explore the furnaces, dam and remaining buildings of this abandoned silver mine. In the small seaside resort of Galéria, hire a kayak and paddle the waters of the Delta du Fango (p71), renowned for its rich birdlife. From Galéria, take the D351 as it follows the valley of the river Fango (p72) upstream. Beside the river are several choice spots for a picnic and a dip in its clear waters. Backtrack almost to Galéria and return to Calvi by the faster, almost-as-attractive D81.

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# CALVI

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Calvi, 'capital' of the Balagne region, is the closest Corsican town to France's Mediterranean coast; indeed, with its thriving cafe culture and restaurants ringing the port, it might have been transplanted from the Côte d'Azur. Explore the lanes and alleys of the citadel, dine at a restaurant near quai Landry, and loll on the town's long strand of beach. Make sure, too, that you jump aboard the rickety Tramway de la Balagne as it trundles to Île Rousse and back.

It was the Romans who first established a settlement here. Frequently exposed to raids by Barbary pirates, Calvi fell under the fairly loose control of Pisa from the 11th to 13th centuries. In the late 13th century, rivalries between local lords caused Calvi's inhabitants to turn to the republic of Genoa for protection. Using Calvi and the southern town of Bonifacio as bases, Genoa soon took control of all Corsica.

The city's most famous hour came in 1553, when France dispatched its troops to invade Corsica. Joined by Turkish forces under the command of the Turkish privateer Dragut, this motley fleet captured Bastia, St-Florent and Bonifacio but failed to take Calvi. In recognition of the town's resistance, Genoa gave the town its motto: *Civitas Calvi semper fidelis* (City of Calvi forever faithful).

## ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

**TOURIST OFFICES** // **Tourist office** (☎ 04 95 65 16 67; www.balagne-corsica.com; port de plaisance; ☎ 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Sat, 9am-1pm Sun

May-Oct, 9am-noon & 2-6pm Mon-Fri Nov-Apr) Covers Calvi and La Balagne. Produces an audioguide to the citadel (€7). **Tourist office annexe** (☎ 10am-12.30pm & 3-6pm Tue-Sat, 3-6pm Sun mid-Jun-Aug, 11am-6pm Tue-Sat early Jun & Sep) A seasonal annexe just inside the citadel.

## EXPLORING CALVI

### 🚊 TRAMWAY DE LA BALAGNE // CLASSIC RAIL JOURNEY BESIDE GETAWAY BEACHES

Every year the beaches and hidden coves of the Balagne coastline come to life with the first beach towel of summer. The life-line that connects these isolated coves is the **Tramway de la Balagne** (☎ 04 95 65 00 61; www.ter-sncf.com, in French; single/return €5.40/8).

This bone-shaking little train trundles between Calvi and Île Rousse up to eight times daily between Easter and September, calling at 15 stations en route, all of which are request only. Hop off at an intermediate halt for a quiet rocky cove or, for sand, leave the train at Algajola or Plage de Bodri, the last stop before Île Rousse.

There has been talk for years of improving the rolling stock but so far little has changed. All to the good – the train's lo-fi quality adds to its charm. Indeed, rail enthusiasts from all over the world now converge on Calvi to ride what's affectionately known as *u trinighellu* (the trembler) before it's finally put out to pasture. Bag a seat on the seaward side.

### 🏰 CITADEL // CALVI'S DEFENSIVE BASTION: HISTORY AND SPECTACULAR VIEWS

No entry tickets, no visiting hours, no compulsory guided tour – you're free to explore the citadel's heterogeneous cluster of buildings as the mood takes you,