European Islands of the Mediterranean: Corsica and Sardinia

May 3-13 & September 5-15, 2020

Corsica remains an unspoiled island of the Mediterranean. Its’ classified sites and nature reserves, including many listed as World Heritage by UNESCO offer endless beauty, charm and delights!

May 3/Sep 5 Day 1: Arrival Bastia, Corsica
Upon arrival, your driver will meet you and transfer to your hotel. Rest of day is independent.
Overnight in Bastia

May 4/Sep 6 Day 2 Tour to Cap Corse (B)
Cap Corse is located on the northern tip of Corsica. Here visitors can experience the whole variety of incredible landscapes that the Isle of Beauty has to offer concentrated in one small area. The regions beauty takes ones’ breath away with abundant jagged coastlines, mountains crashing into the sea, hidden coves, and spectacular beaches. Historic gems include old chapels, churches, and towers, picturesque fishing towns, lush vineyards, and quaint perched villages literally carved into the mountainside.

A driver/guide will pick you up at your hotel. Heading towards Cap Corse you will make stops at the charming Miomo, Lavasina, and Erbalunga villages, and the Genoese Tower of Losse. Then drive to Luri’s hilltop and seaside hamlets.

A stop for lunch (pay direct).

Afterwards, a tour up the west coast of Cap Corsica follows to visit the quaint villages of Pino and Nonza. We culminate the day with a drive along the wine route and a stop in Patrimonio for a wine tasting (pay direct). Transfer back to our hotel at the end of the tour.

Duration: 9 hours
Overnight in Bastia
May 5/Sep 7 Day 3: Bastia - La Balagna – L’île Rousse - Calvi (B)

The Balagna region is known for its olive groves and its countless churches. The latter gives it its nickname la sainte Balagna or the holy Balagna.

This route is a feast for the senses. Colorful blooming maquis vegetation gives the area a sweet fragrance in the springtime. Wherever you turn abundant traditional cheeses and sausages await to be sampled. Idyllic beaches offer crystal clear water and evoke the Caribbean while high lookouts give breathtaking panoramas of the mountains and sea.

Your driver/guide will pick you up at your hotel to visit La Balagna starting at the picturesque port town of Saint-Florent and the spectacular Desert of Agriates. Although its name might suggest otherwise, this area contains beautiful beaches and is actually quite green in the springtime before it dries up in the summer heat.

Next is L’Île-Rousse, a pretty 18th-century town founded by the Corsican statesman and military leader Pasquale Paoli who fought against Genoese and French control of the island. At some point, your guide will take us to a pleasant café for lunch (pay directly).

Continue to Calvi for a visit of its citadel. The city famously had the motto “semper fidelis,” a pledge of its loyalty during 500 years of Genoese rule. Your trip is rounded up by a tour through the old villages of La Balagna for a voyage back to medieval Corsica.

In the late afternoon, transfer to your hotel.

Duration: 9 hours
Overnight: Hotel Abbaye in Calvi

May 6/ Sep 8 Day 4: Gulf of Porto and the Scandola Nature Reserve – Ajaccio (B)

Discover the Scandola Nature Reserve and the Gulf of Porto, a natural wonder and UNESCO World Heritage site. Experience one of the last Mediterranean enclaves to provide shelter for endemic flora and birdlife such as ospreys and peregrine falcons. Created in 1975, the nature reserve is only accessible by sea.

The Calanche de Piana evokes Norwegian fjords if they were found in warmer Mediterranean waters. It offers an outstanding landscape of pink granite rocks shaped over the centuries by changes in the temperature, strong winds and sea spray. A fascinating play of colors unfold before your eyes: intense blues from the sea, bright light, and the pink, red, and orange shades of the granite. Erosion had sculpted the stone into monumental natural artwork.

We depart the hotel at 7 am for the 2.5 hr drive, arrive at Porto by 9:30 am to board a public silent hybrid for a 3 hour boat trip through the Gulf of Porto and the Natural Reserve of Scandola. The boat will stop in the remote village of Girolata, accessible only from the sea.

After the boat ride, we stop for lunch in Piana (pay direct) and have a short look around. Piana is a pretty village set in and overlooking the fabulous Calanques de Piana. The village is about 11km from Porto. The main historic site is the Baroque church which has a tall square bell tower and inside are some frescos and paintings by Paul Novellini in a typical Corsican style.

At about 2:30 pm continue to Ajaccio (approx 2.5 hr drive). Enjoy a drive along this beautiful west coast road dominated by the Gulf of Porto and the Scandola Nature Reserve. On arrival check into the hotel. Evening at leisure, dinner on your own.

Duration: 10 hours
Overnight: Hotel Les Mouettes, Ajaccio
May 7/Sep 9 Day 5: Tour of Ajaccio (B)

Surrounded by a fantastic mountain range, Ajaccio is an elegant city. From the top of its citadel, it has preserved its bay which is one of the most beautiful in the world. Strolling the lanes of the old town, you will discover its Napoleonic heritage, its prestigious museums, its daily market boasting so many flavors.

We depart the hotel at 9 am this morning we have a 4 hour tour exploring the Imperial City. We wander the narrow streets around the citadel; visit the Bonaparte House, the birthplace of Napoleon and now a national museum. Appreciate Italian Baroque art in the Fesch Museum. The musée Fesch is the central museum of fine arts in Ajaccio on Corsica. Located within the gated Palais Fesch, it is in the town's Borgu d'Ajaccio quarter. It was established by Napoleon I's uncle, cardinal Joseph Fesch. [http://www.musee-fesch.com/](http://www.musee-fesch.com/)

You'll have free time to browse in the daily market for local specialties and for lunch (pay direct).

After lunch, at about 3 pm, we pass the beaches to head to the Parata Peninsula on the west side of Ajaccio (approx. 30 min drive). The Sanguinaires road follows the sea and its red rocks and leads to the Peninsula.

We enjoy a walk along a trail which boast numerous viewpoints and takes in the rich flora. In Spring, the landscape is enhanced when dotted with wild flowers. At the promontory of the Parata headland stands a Genosese tower, offering a wonderful panoramic view of the Sanguinaires archipelago and the Sanguinaires Lighthouse. We enjoy fantastic sunset colors here.

On the drive back to the hotel, we see the Capo di Feno Bay and the Castle of Punta. Dinner on your own.

In the heart of the city, many restaurants and markets keep Corsican gastronomic tradition alive. You will enjoy seafood (urchins, lobsters, local fish) as well as mountain specialties (fresh bruccio – i.e. a sort of Corsican cream cheese – tasty cured meat, hew or goat cheeses). Gourmets will appreciate savory pastry turnovers made with vegetable or herbs as well as Corsican sweet doughnuts.

*Duration: 10 hours*
*Overnight: Hotel Les Mouettes in Ajaccio*

May 8/Sep 10 Day 6: Full Day Tour en-route to Bonifacio (B)

Depart at 9 am for the 2.5 hr drive to Bonifacio, with breathtaking landscapes. Bonifacio is medieval city of more than a thousand years of history, a World Heritage UNESCO town, installed on a natural promontory overlooking the Bouches de Bonifacio.

After about an hour’s drive, we stop to visit Filitorsa, one of the most famous prehistoric megalithic sites of Corsica, The period of occupation spans from the end of the Neolithic era and the beginning of the Bronze Age until around the Roman times. Finds of arrow heads and pottery date earliest inhabitation to 3300 BC. Around 1500 BC, 2-3 metre menhirs (large man-made upright stones) were erected. They have been carved with representations of human faces, armour and weapons. The menhirs were cast down, broken up and reused in some cases as building material by the Torréens (an invading group of people). The Torréens built circular stone structures on the site, known as torri (or torre), which may have been used as temples. The torri are remarkably well preserved. We have approx 2 hour visit here.

A few kilometers from Filitorsa, we stop in the old town of Sartène. “The most Corsican of all Corsican cities,” offers a stunning panoramic view from the Gulf of Valinco to the massif of the Aiguilles de Bavella. You will wander along the picturesque narrow alleys and make a stop in one of the manifold shops offering local handicraft and delicatessen. Most shops propose tastings. Enjoy some free time for lunch (pay direct).

One of Corsica's most interesting museums is here, the “A Casa di Roccapina” featuring exhibitions, shows and interactive activities. Audio-guides in English will be at your disposal. This is small museum.
Continuing, we drive along the virgin, jagged Roccapina Coast. The turquoise sea, white sand beach, and strangely sculpted rocks are thoroughly impressive. One of these rocks is said to look like a lion and is known as the Lion of Roccapina.

The drive continues to Bonifacio where we take a boat to the foot of the caves and cliffs that dominate the White City. From the Pertusato Lighthouse you can see Sardinia across the sea. This part of the island is part of the International Marine Park (a 1-hour boat ride). Enjoy some free time browsing and shopping in the lively and quaint streets of the citadel.

Transfer to hotel.

*Duration: 9 hours*

*Overnight: Hotel Solemare in Bonifacio*

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**Sardinia**

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**May 9/ Sep 11 Day 7: Bonifacio- Santa Theresa- Alghero (BL)**

Transfer to the port for the ferry from Bonifacio to Santa Theresa, on Moby Lines, departs 8:30 am, arrives 9:20 am. We have a jam-packed day so our pace is quick and timing is critical in order to fit it all in.

Santa Theresa di Gallura is a small seaside village on the north coast of Sardinia, one of the most colorful and authentic, though it does get busy in peak season. It is a historic town with medieval churches and Nuragic ruins scattered around the village.

Your guide will meet you at the ferry port. Have a brief time to browse the village, see the Longonsardo Tower from the outside (option to go inside 2eu pp/no lift, pay direct).

In order to not have lunch too late, we need to depart at 10 am for the drive to Citadel of Castelsardo, Genoese citadel which still rules the sea with its amazing position. Castelsardo is a picturesque historic town on the northern coast with a fortified castle.

Arrival at 11:15 am. We go directly up the hill for a visit of Castelsardo's castle, the Castello dei Doria. It houses the Museo dell'Intreccio del Mediterraneo, a museum of basket-weaving, an important local handicraft. Around the various rooms and halls of the castle are cases containing all sorts of local woven products, from fishing nets to grain storage vessels.

The castle was built by the Doria family of Genoa, and for several years in the fourteenth century Castelsardo, then called Castelgenovese, was the home of a Doria bride: the Sardinian heroine Eleanora d'Arborea. The museum is interesting, especially if you are thinking of purchasing some local woven craft products to take home. One of the best bits of the castle, though, is its terrace up among the battlements,
with views over the town, along the coast, out to sea over the Gulf of Asinara and towards Corsica. The castle’s opening hours vary considerably throughout the year, so our visit is depending if it is open.

Afterwards, a simple lunch at a local restaurant in one of the lanes/alleys of the medieval citadel (cutting board of salami, cheese, mixed salad; tea/coffee or water included). Here old women sit in doorways weaving baskets that are very elaborate and far superior to those found in souvenir shops.

Depart at 1:30 pm for a 30 min to Monte d’Accoddi, a Neolithic archaeological site, located in the territory of Sassari near Porto Torres. The site consists of a massive raised stone platform thought to have been an altar. We have a guided tour of the Temple-Altar of Monte d’Accoddi, the only Ziqqurat in the Mediterranean Basin (to see another one you have to go to the Middle East). This is a public tour, duration 40-60 min depending on number of people. https://www.sardegnaturismo.it/it/esplora/tempio-altare-di-monte-daccoddi

Another 30 minutes drive brings us to the Necropolis of Anghelu Ruju, an archaeological site dating 3200-2800 BC. This is the largest necropolis of pre-Nuragic Sardinia. It was discovered accidentally in 1903 during the excavations for the construction of the farmhouse in the Sella & Mosca winery. The site is located right next to the winery. One hour guided tour. https://www.sardegnaturismo.it/en/node/14296

If all timing goes according to plan, we may have time to enjoy a 30 min. wine-tasting at the Sella & Mosca winery, founded in 1899 and one of the most famous in Sardinia, it also has a church inside the estate. Closes 5 pm in May; 7 pm in September. https://www.sellaemosca.com/ https://www.sellaemosca.com/

Continue to Alghero, approx 30 min drive. Arrival in Alghero, one of Sardinia’s most beautiful medieval cities, encircled by ancient walls, it’s known for its cobblestoned old center. Its’ Catalan Gothic buildings include the Cattedrale di Santa Maria, with an imposing bell tower, Palazzo Guillot and Chiesa di San Francesco, a 14th-century church. The nearby Chiesa San Michele has a colorful tiled dome.

After check-in, if you have the energy enjoy walking independently around the old town. Our hotel is in the heart of the city, a few minutes from the center.

Optional (pay entrance fee directly): Those interested may visit the Museo del Corallo di Alghero (Coral Museum). Alghero is known for its red coral jewelry. The Coral Museum is set in a 19th-century mansion, near the Piazza Sulis, the sea front promenade village of Constantine. It tells the history and significance of the ancient practice of harvesting the red coral for which Alghero is renowned and exhibits old photos of the equipment and boats used in the harvest, as well as objects made from the coral and some videos with narration in English and Italian. It also goes into great depth about the history, culture and identity that the red coral has provided, for Alghero. The red coral also has a religious purpose, in connection with blood and therefore signifies life. https://www.algheroturismo.eu/en/inserimenti/museo-del-corallo/ Open Daily: 10:30 am – 1 pm and 5 pm – 7:30 pm.

Total drive time from Santa Theresa to Alghero is 2.5 hrs not counting stops for touring and lunch.

**May 10/Sep 12 Day 8: Alghero - Nuraghe Palmavera - Tharros-Oristano (B.L)**

Depart at 8:30 am this morning to visit the beautiful Nuraghe Palmavera, dating the Nuraghic civilization, 1500 BC that built more than 10,000 of these monuments in Sardinia. In the center is a meeting room with a reproduction of the Nuraghe and where the Nuragic people met to make collective decisions. https://nuraghepalmavera.com/

Afterwards, we drive 170 km/approx. 2.5 hrs along the coastal road, to visit Rovine di Tharros, an ancient city (archaeological site) on the west coast, southern shore of the Sinis Peninsula, near the village of San Giovanni di Sinis. We will have lunch and then a tour, approx. 1.5 hrs.

Excavations showed that from the 8th century BC its abandonment in the 10th century Tharros was inhabited, first by Phoenicians, then by Punics, then by Romans. The Diocese of Tharros was established around the year 400. Its’ only historically recorded bishop being Johannes circa 500. It was renamed as the Diocese of Sinis-Tharros in 700. In 800 it gained territory from the suppressed Diocese of Cornus.
From 1000 it was promoted the Metropolitan Archdiocese of Sinis-Tharros, apparently to match the prestige of the Giudice (feudal temporal governor) of Arborea, which had taken residence there.

Continue approx. 30 min to Oristano. Independent evening. 

Overnight at Hotel Mistral, located in downtown.

May 11/Sep 13 Day 9: Oristano - Su Nuraxi di Barumini - Giara Natural Park - Cagliari (B,L)

Departure at 8:30 am for the one hour drive to the village of Barumini. Here we visit the UNESCO site Su Nuraxi, amazing for its massive structure looking like a medieval castle.

We also visit the nearby Casa Zapata, a noble Spanish mansion of the XVI century, built on the top of a nuraghe, is impressive for the excavation and the small Ethnographic Museum with a section dedicated to the "launeddas," the wind instrument typical of Sardinia.

Stop for lunch at a typical restaurant.

Next, about 5 km from Barumini, a stop at The Marmilla. It is characterized by round hills that look like breasts, and it takes its name from their Latin word, "mammilla." On one of the hills, there is a ruin of a medieval castle which dominates the hamlet of Las Plassas. It is not possible to visit the ruins of the castle as it is being restored. We do visit the multi-media museum of Las Plassas.

Not far from Barumini, visit the Giara Natural Park (guided tour at 3 pm), a basaltic plateau 500 meters over the sea level. Giara is studded with cork oaks and water ponds where the wild horses drink from. The plateau is gorgeous during the spring-blooming. Enjoy a leisurely short guided walk.

Afterwards, continue the drive to Cagliari. Evening at leisure.

May 12/Sep 14 Day 10: Cagliari: Explore Nora and visit the capital Cagliari (B,L)

Depart at 8:30 am and drive 45 minutes to the ancient city of Nora.

Founded in the VIII century B.C. by the Phoenicians in a beautiful bay, Nora became an important town under the Romans. The city was abandoned after the Vandalic invasions, and little by little was buried by the sand till 1954.

You will see the amazing mosaics, the massive thermal pools and the theatre. On the beach of Nora a small church dedicated to the Saint Patron of Sardinia, Sant 'Efisio, was built in the XII century. Enjoy a bit of free time to wander and photograph.

Then return to Cagliari lunch at a restaurant and visit the town. The capital Cagliari, the "City of Sun" takes its nickname from its mild and sunny climate. After a panoramic drive, with some photo stops at Basilica of Our Lady of Bonaria and Monte Urpinu, enjoy a walking tour of the historical district of Castello. You will see the medieval towers, the Spanish bastions, the Romanesque cathedral of Saint Mary, the old noble mansions.

Culminate the day at the Museo Archeologico Nazionale di Cagliari, last entrance is 7:15 pm, museum closes at 8.  http://museoarcheocagliari.beniculturali.it/

May 13/Sep 15 Day 11: Depart (B)

Transfer to the airport.

Or continue with us to Malta: flight KMAir Malta 669, dep 3:40 pm, arr 4:50 pm (subject to change)

PRICE MAY; SEPT TBD: $4545 per person based on min 6 people. Single Room Supplement: $915
*This tour requires a 30% deposit; 50% of this is non-refundable. This is different from our other tours which require a flat $600 non-refundable deposit. The online reservation form will automatically process $600 per person. We shall process the remainder manually, and will do so four months prior to the tour date. The final balance due will be three months prior to departure, as per our usual policy.

Includes:

**Corscia**

*Accommodations* based on availability, with breakfast.


**Calvi:** Hotel Abbaye Calvi, 4* 16th century restored monastery, 15 min walk to town center [https://www.hostellerie-abbaye.com/en/](https://www.hostellerie-abbaye.com/en/)


**Bonifacio:** Hotel Solemare 3* in the port area [http://www.hotel-solemare.com/](http://www.hotel-solemare.com/)

Airport transfers on the tour arrival day (extra cost if arriving or departing other days)

Transport by Volkswagen, Caravelle or Mercedes Viano mini-van (2-6 people 8 seats); Mercedes Sprinter or Renault Master mini bus (7-12 people, 15 seats) depending on group size

Driver/Guide for 2-6 people; driver with separate guide for 7-12 people.

Entrance Fees as listed

Bottled water during drives and touring

Ferry ticket Bonifacio to Santa Theresa if continuing to Sardinia.

Corsica is the most expensive of all these islands so we did not include lunches here allowing you to choose to eat a simple lunch: soup, salads, cheese or a fuller meal as you wish. When there is a full day of sightseeing we stop to eat together at the same place but everyone can order what they want. Waiters don’t mind that you ask for separate checks (just do it when you place the order).

**Sardinia**

*Accommodations* based on availability, with breakfast.

**Alghero:** Hotel Alghero Vacanze 4* located in the heart of Alghero a few minutes walk to the historic center. [http://www.algherovacanzehotel.com/](http://www.algherovacanzehotel.com/)

**Oristano:** Hotel Mistral 4* downtown [http://www.hotelmistraloristano.it/](http://www.hotelmistraloristano.it/)

**Cagliari:** Hotel Flora 4* 1 min walk to the sea, 3-6 min walk to churches, Piazza Yenne; 10 min to city center [http://hotel-flora.cagliari.top-hotels-sardinia.com/en/](http://hotel-flora.cagliari.top-hotels-sardinia.com/en/)

English speaking driver

Private accompanying guide group size 6 and above; less than 6 people will be with licensed guides at archaeological sites.

Transport by Mercedes Viano mini-van or mini bus. 4 people/7 seats; 6 people/8 seats; 8-12 people 14 seats

Entrance Fees

Four lunches

Bottled water during drives and touring

**Does Not Include:** international flight, the tourist tax approx. 2-4 euro per day payable directly to hotels; no tax in Cagliari. Tips to drivers, guides, hotel porters, meals other than listed