



Corse : Moderate Cycling West coast and mountains

A week of healthy activity in beautiful surroundings, the itinerary will take you through the west and central regions of Corsica. It is a superb balance of mountain and sea scenery offering a view of the authentic and traditional aspects of the island. Our starting point is Ajaccio, the capital of the South. Heading north, the route meanders over rolling hills following the coastline offering views of sweeping gulfs, inviting beaches and small rocky creeks all the way to Cargèse. This vibrant, traditional village was once populated by Greek settlers, its peculiarity is two churches that face each other -one is Catholic, one is Greek Orthodox. The scenery changes dramatically as you approach the Calanques, a jumble of red granite pinnacles and sea cliffs, a kaleidoscope of colour. From Porto the route will head inland above the Spelunca Gorge up to the first mountain village, Evisa. The Col de Vergio, is a high mountain pass that separates the two counties of Corsica and marks your transition into the North. The mountainous Niolu Valley is the most traditional area and at one time was the most isolated region. The Scala di Santa Regina is a torturous road that provides the gateway out of the Niolu.

Tour Aventure Trekking

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Program

D1 - Start of holiday in Ajaccio

Arrival in Ajaccio, time to settle into your hotel before exploring. Ajaccio is the capital of Southern Corsica, the ambiance is very vibrant and Mediterranean. It is great to just sit in one of the cafés opposite the harbour and soak up the atmosphere. The old streets and houses are often dwarfed by the large ferries that arrive from Italy or mainland France. Visit the shops, museums, cathedral and Napoleon's house or simply relax on the beach. Opportunity to visit the Îles Sanguinaires by boat.

D2 - From Ajaccio to Cargèse

Heading north cycling among rolling hills your route follows the coast line to the first mountain saddle 'Col St Bastian'. A plunging view of the 'gulf of Sagone' with its long beach and stretching white sands. The sea is constantly in view, the route meanders and undulates past small creeks, wild expanses of deserted coastline and the more frequented beaches to Cargèse. Cargèse is a small typical village with an attractive harbour and bustling small centre. It was founded by a Greek population and it is worth visiting the Catholic and Greek Orthodox churches that face each other, just a short distance apart.

Distance : 51km, altitude gain : 725m, descent : 645m.

D3 - From Cargèse to Evisa

Further on, Piana is a picture postcard village of small stone houses, 'les Calanques' provide a superb backdrop. A jumble of red granite rocks with an extraordinary erosion, high pinnacles sculpted into tortured shapes and potted with smooth indentations. Maritime pine trees cling to the cliffs adding extra beauty and fresh pine fragrance. The overall scene is a kaleidoscope of colour with the shock blue sea below. Heading inland a journey up above the Spelunca gorge which offers wondrous views down into its depths. Arriving in the vibrant village of Evisa situated at 830m and known locally as the pearl of the mountains, a great spot to sit and enjoy a chestnut beer in the village café. The village is surrounded by age old chestnut woods and though the chestnuts don't have the same vital importance in the economy, they are still exploited, used to make beer, flour and are found in some delicious recipes.

Distance : 66km, altitude gain : +1350m, descent : -580m.

D4 - From Evisa to Corté

Continuing upwards you will be cycling through the dappled light of the enchanting Aitone forest. A forest of high soaring, straight Corsican pines that were at one time used to build masts for ships. Emerging at Col de Vergio a famed mountain pass at 1400m the dividing point between the island's two departments the view opens right out. From here on, a welcome downhill ride into the Niolu Valley. The Niolu is the very core of the island and dominated by the highest peaks, the Monte Cinto and the Paglia Orba are foreboding silhouettes. It is the most traditional, rugged and mountainous, there are shepherds here who still practise transhumance. The Scala di Santa Regina (or the Queen of heavens highway) is a marvel of engineering, the Golu River pounds below this torturous route. Taking the direction of the island's centre, you will be surprised when Corte first comes into site. It is the island's historical capital and the only real town that is not situated on the coast.

Distance : 66km, altitude gain : +950m, descent : -1330m.

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D5 - The Restonica Gorge

Corte is built on the confluence of two gorges the Restonica and the Tavignano, though parallel and close by the two gorges are quite different. The Restonica is a place of astounding natural beauty, offering everything from the pounding clear emerald waters of the mountain torrent, rock pool after rock pool, inviting swimming spots, plunge pools and thick pine forests topped with high mountain peaks. At the very end of the route, you will arrive at Grotelle, a small hamlet of shepherd's cabins. There is a superb mountain ambience here, the air is always fresher than down in the town, jagged mountain pinnacles loom above and the air is laced with the subtle fragrance of juniper and alder bushes. The stone cabins have all been restored. One is a legendary refreshment stop 'chez Theo' It is from here were people start out to walk up to the glacier lake of Melo and higher still the lake of Capitello the deepest on the island. On the ridge above passes the famous GR20 walking route reputed as the best long distance mountain walk in Europe. Once back in Corte you may want to make a visit to the island's museum, which is beautifully housed high up in the towns old citadel and offers an enjoyable insight into the island. The old part of town is full of interest, pottery workshops, craftshops, the very building where Pascal Poali ran the government during the island's independent years.

Distance : 32km, altitude gain : +930m, descent : -930m.

D6 - From Corte to Vizzavona

The area south of Corte, the Vénacais, is a site of inspiring hilltop villages. When you look across at the cluster of Riventosa, Poggio de Venaco and Casanova with the sun rise early morning and the misty clouds clinging to the hills, the picture will surely stay imprinted on your mind. You will traverse St Pierre and Venaco before starting the climb up towards Vizzavona. This is another high Col or mountain pass, it is the midway point for the GR20 long distance walk that traverses the diagonal spine of high granite mountains. There are thick pine forests all around and signs to the beauty spot, 'Cascades des Anglais'. Vizzavona itself is a small hamlet with a superb eccentric hotel, a remote railway station and huge old hotels that have long since closed but give witness to a period at the beginning of the century when English tourists came looking for rest and refreshment in a mountain environment.

Distance : 32km, altitude gain : +995m, descent : -315m.

D7 - From Vizzavona to Ajaccio

Once over the Col you can enjoy a downhill ride to the village of Bocagnano, the high surrounding mountains tower all around, why not stop in the centre to refill water bottles at the spring and be tempted into the reputed local bakery. The route continues downhill and from time to cross over the mountain railway. Shortly, the gulf of Ajaccio will come into sight, with enticing views of the sea.

Distance : 60km, altitude gain : 750m, descent : 1720m.

D8 - End of holiday in Ajaccio

End of holiday in Ajaccio.

This programme is an example of the itinerary we aim to adhere to. It may be possible, if situations arise that are beyond our control, for the itinerary to be modified.

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Details

Level of difficulty

Certain days' cycling are not too long, given that they are mountain stages and the altitude gain is considerable. Daily distances will vary between 29 and 64 kms on tarmaced roads.

Price

- From 01/04/2010 to 30/06/2010 : Price per person in Double room 780 €, Price per person in Single room 900 €
- From 01/07/2010 to 31/08/2010 : Price per person in Double room 805 €, Price per person in Single room 925 €
- From 01/09/2010 to 31/10/2010 : Price per person in Double room 780 €, Price per person in Single room 900 €

Supplements/reductions :

- Bike hire : 85 €/pers - Reduction if you choose to carry your own luggage : 120 €/pers

Price includes :

Half board accommodation, (except days 1 and 7, evening meal not included), internal transfers, the moving on of baggage between hotels, the dossier containing your maps, route notes and all necessary details needed for your holiday.

Price does not include :

Unscheduled transfers, evening meal on days 1 and 7, drinks, picnics, additional activities, holiday insurance.

Encadrement

Self-guided

Carrying

You need to carry a small day sack only with a water bottle, camera, picnic and wind jacket.

The main luggage will be transported by vehicle between the different hotels.

Accommodation/food

Accommodation

- Half board in twin, double and single rooms in hotels.

Food

- Continental breakfast (tea, coffee, milk, butter, jam)
- Evening meals often based on local specialities.
- Picnics and drinks not included.

Starting point/end

Starting point : At your first hotel in Ajaccio.

End : At your last hotel in Ajaccio, after breakfast.

Organisation

We propose a self-guided, independent formula. You choose your departure date and we will take care of all the rest between the initial rendez-vous time through to the dispersion point. We transport your bags between the hotels ,provide the maps and good walking route notes. This is a way of enjoying complete flexibility, you dictate the pace and

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rhythm of your holiday.

Dates

Departures every Sunday from the beginning of April to the end of October.

Departures on alternative days are possible on request.

Number of participants

From 2 people

Access

Ajaccio port or airport.

Bibliography

The Rough Guide

The Granite Island – Dorothy Carrington

Practical information

ACCOMMODATION DETAILS

For supplementary nights at Ajaccio

Hôtel** Le Kallisté: 04 95 51 34 45

Hôtel Le Dauphin: 04 95 51 29 96

Hôtel*** Albion: 04 95 21 66 70

Hôtel*** San Carlu: 04 95 21 13 84

Chambre d'hôtes chez Madame Battini: 04 95 21 83 04

HOW TO GET THERE

By Air

Direct charter flights during the season from Gatwick and Heathrow offered by Air France, British Midland. Contact Holiday Options or Sky Marketing. Scheduled services via Paris, Montpellier or Nice.

By Boat

A high speed service BGV, overnight ferries and semi- fast ferries offer a regular service to Ajaccio port.

SNCM Ferries - 61 Boulevard des dames - 13005 Marseille. Departures from Marseille, Nice or Toulon.

Corsica Ferries, Moby Lines, departures from Toulon, Nice and Italy.

What to bring and pack

-A small day pack for your water bottle, camera, picnic and waterproof

-A bag, rucksack or suitcase for your main luggage 10 kg maximum per person.

For the day time

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- Comfortable shoes/trainers
- Walking socks
- Warm fleece
- Shorts and T shirts
- Swimming costume or trunks
- Towel
- Water bottle (one litre minimum)
- Personal first aid kit

For your picnics

- A good cutting knife and some plastic bags

Sun and rain protection

- Sunglasses and sun cream
- Sun hat
- Wind and waterproof jacket (Gore-Tex style).

Relaxing time

- Trainers or open sandals
- Warm Fleece and casual wear

Tour Aventure Backup

The Tour Aventure team is present and always at hand to ensure the smooth running of your cycling holiday. We are on the ground and ready to assist in any eventuality.

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