

## FRANCE – CORSICA FROM THE MOUNTAINS TO THE SEA

8-days / 7-nights **SELF-GUIDED** inn-to-inn walking - departures from May to October



The first of a series of designated walking trails in many regions of France, the GR20 is in the French Regional Nature Park of Corsica which was formed in 1971 to protect a large area of the mountains which make up the backbone of this rugged island. Since then a network of footpaths has been created to introduce walkers to the very best of the inland scenery in such a way that it remains unspoilt.

The GR20 is still the most well-known of these walks and it is a challenging high level ridge walk. More accessible and much less well known are the interesting and varied long distance footpaths which cross the mountains from east to west, or from “Sea to Sea”. Based on old mule tracks and ancient routes of transhumance, these routes traditionally connected mountain villages with high level pastures. Crossing intermediate ridges and following forested valleys, they take the walker into the heart of the mountains, past tumbling rivers, mixed woodland and through attractive villages.

We have chosen the best section of the “Sea to Sea” or *Mare a Mare* North, starting in Sermano and walking west via Corte, past the lake at Calacuccia. You reach the watershed at Col de Vergio (1477m) and descend to the coast at Porto via the charming old chestnut town of Evisa. Each evening relax and reminisce on the day in a comfortable inn with time to enjoy the island’s distinctive cuisine and wine. A local vehicle transfers your baggage from hotel to hotel so that you need carry only a light day pack throughout.

**Departs:** Daily departures (except Mondays) from 1<sup>st</sup> May to 1<sup>st</sup> October

**Cost from:** **\$2010** per person twin share      Single room supplement from \$595

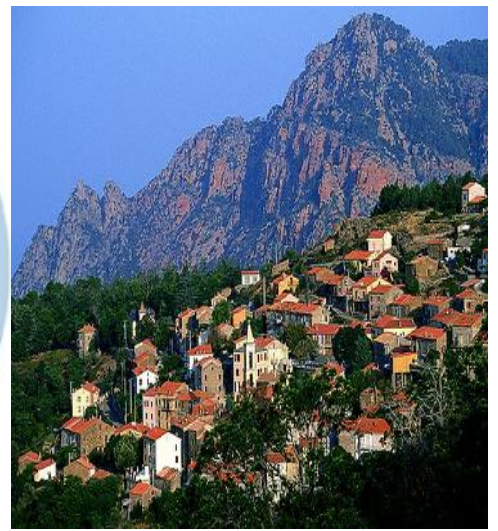
**Includes:** 7 nights’ accommodation in 2- and 3-star hotels, 7 breakfasts, 3 dinners, maps and detailed Route Notes (one set per room), emergency hotline; transfer from Corte to Sermano on Day 2, from Col di Vergio to Calacuccia on Day 4, from Calacuccia to Col di Vergio on Day 5; luggage transfer between overnight stays on days 2 to 6 (1 bag per person, up to 20kg)

**Not included:** Meals not mentioned, drinks, entrance fees or personal expenses. Travel between Ajaccio and Corte, and Porto and Ajaccio are not included.

**Grade:** Moderate. The route itself is not difficult, although it is more than just a ramble – there are some rough ascents, with maquis scrub to negotiate, sometimes over rocky terrain. Day stages range in length from 10km to 27km, average 5 to 6 hours of walking each day with an average ascent and descent of 300m. *Due to the remote nature of this walk this self-guided tour is not available for those who wish to travel alone.*

**Accommodation and Meals:** Six nights are spent in 2-star hotels and one night in a 3-star hotel, all with private facilities. The hotels described are our usual choice; if not available then we use alternatives (sometimes with a supplement) and you will be informed when booking. On 3 nights evening meals are included in the tour price. On other evenings dinner is at own arrangements and there are restaurants nearby.

**Call OUTDOOR TRAVEL on 1800 331 582 for details and reservations**



## Suggested itinerary:

### Day 1: Arrive in Corte

Both Ajaccio and Bastia have international airports serviced by a number of airlines, and Corsica is also well-served by ferries from the mainland. Ferry services run between Livorno, Genoa, Nice or Marseille and Bastia, Ajaccio or Calvi. If arriving in Ajaccio, make your way by taxi or airport bus to the railway station for a scenic journey through the mountains on the old rack railway to Corte. If you arrive in Bastia take a taxi to the station and the train to Corte. If arriving Calvi, the train to Corte involves a change at Ponte Leccia. The last train to Corte generally departs around 4.30pm (earlier on Sundays and public holidays) so check timetables and arrange flight and/or ferry arrivals with train timetables in mind.

You spend two nights in a comfortable 2-star hotel in the centre of Corte, with dinner included on the first night. On the second night, choose from the numerous good restaurants in the citadelle end of town.

### Day 2: Sermano to Corte

**walking @ 18km**

We arrange a transfer by taxi (included) to Sermano to start this day's walk back to Corte. Sermano was once a farming village; now most of the population has left for larger centres. The walk is a good warm-up as you traverse the hills and valleys from Sermano through maquis and chestnut, past a couple of sleepy villages with interesting churches, and then descend from a high grassy pass, past cork oak and beeches to Corte, the ancient capital of the island. At dinner tonight you may like to reward the day's walk by trying the local beer, brewed with chestnuts, or a glass of rustic and robust Corsican red.

### Day 3: Corte to Calacuccia

**walking @ 27km**

Pass through the densely-forested Tavignano Valley and over Col de la Croix before descending to the barraged Lac de Croix, and your hotel in the village of Calacuccia. This is a long day but the spectacular scenery provides adequate compensation. You can shorten the walk to 18km by walking part of the Tavignano valley, returning to Corte and then travelling with luggage by taxi at your own cost to Calacuccia.

The next two nights are spent in a comfortable modern hotel outside the village, a small family-run establishment with just twelve rooms. There are splendid views over to Monte Cinto and Paglia Orba from the terrace bar. The hotel has a bar but no restaurant; however a set-menu dinner is included on the first night, normally taken at a restaurant 10 minutes' walk from the hotel.

### Day 4: Calacuccia to Castel de Vergio

**walking @ 15km**

Walk via the *chemin de ronde* to the Col de Vergio (1477m). Ascend to the watershed, past shepherds' huts with views of Monte Cinto (2706m), the highest peak in Corsica. Walk up to the mountain refuge Castel de Vergio, where you can sit at the terrace bar and have a beer or ice cream while waiting for the taxi transfer back to your hotel in Calacuccia (included). Alternatively, you can walk the route in reverse, taking the taxi from Calacuccia in the morning, making it largely a descent. Dinner is at your own arrangements tonight.

### Day 5: Col di Vergio to Evisa

**walking @ 12km**

Transfer from Calacuccia to Col de Vergio (or just below) to start the day's walk (included). Descend through a forest of Lariccio pine, passing waterfalls and magnificent chestnut trees, to the attractive village of Evisa with its fine views of the valley. In the afternoon explore the village, which is famed historically for chestnut production; you can still purchase chestnut products in the shops.

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In Evisa you stay in a simple 2-star hotel in spectacular surroundings, with a swimming pool (open in summer). From the terrace restaurant there is an incredible view west across the Spelunca Gorge and forest to the sea and the peak of Capu d'Orto (1294m). Dinner is included.

#### **Day 6: Evisa to Porto**

**walking @ 13km**

In the morning continue your descent of the Spelunca Gorge on an old mule trail in the welcome shade of the beech, oak and strawberry trees. Carry on past olive groves to Ota, another picturesque mountain village where you may like to have lunch. The walk from Ota is pleasant, scenic and all downhill to Porto. Once in Porto you should have time for a swim, a walk up to the old Genoese fort (Corsica was controlled by the Genoese for nearly 500 years), maybe a boat ride and always time for a great evening meal at one of the seaside restaurants, at own arrangements, perhaps enjoying a delicious seafood dish.

Your 3-star hotel is on the edge of the village and has a swimming pool. You may like to consider an extra night in Porto (at extra cost) so that you have time for the day trip by boat to the Scandola Nature Reserve, a UNESCO World Heritage site, where ospreys nest. There is also a lovely walk to Capu d'Orto which offers wonderful views – you can use the Ajaccio bus to make this more manageable.

#### **Day 7: Porto to Ajaccio**

Make your way with your luggage to Ajaccio by bus (paid locally). There is usually an 8.00am bus but we suggest you confirm the times locally. There is **NO SUNDAY SERVICE**. The bus stop is @ 1.5km from the port so you might need a taxi for heavy luggage. It is a scenic bus ride to Ajaccio along the corniche road which winds into and around the Calanches National Park with its impressive coastal cliff formations. The direct bus service takes approximately 2½ hours.

Tonight you stay in a comfortable 3-star hotel in the old centre of Ajaccio, located near the bustling harbour of the town, the train and bus stations and a beach. Extra nights can be arranged at extra cost. Ajaccio is a busy cosmopolitan Mediterranean town, Corsica's largest, with an impressive harbour and narrow streets, restaurants and shops. This was the birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte, and the house is now a museum.

#### **Day 8: Departure day**

Tour ends after breakfast in Ajaccio – take a local bus or taxi to the airport or ferry port.



Other **Outdoor Travel** walking holidays – guided in small groups or self-guided with inn-to-inn luggage transfers and meals – are available in many parts of Europe including **the Loire Valley, Provence, the Dordogne** in France, the **Amalfi or Cinque Terre** coast, **Umbria or Tuscany** in Italy, **Andalucía** in Spain or the **Alps** in Switzerland, in Scotland including the scenic **West Highland Way**,

Long-distance walks are also available, with inn-to-inn luggage transfers and meals, including pilgrimage routes in France and Spain such as the **Camino de Santiago** or **Way of St James** from Le Puy in France to Santiago in Spain, the **Via Francigena** the pilgrims' Road to Rome in Italy, the **Camino Portuguese** from Porto to Santiago and Wainwright's **Coast to Coast** walk in England.

#### **Contact Outdoor Travel for more details and reservations:**

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