

RUSTIC TRAILS HOLIDAYS

Discovering Corsica, 19 June 2011

Highlights

Based in Calacuccia, in the Niolu mountains of Corsica's spectacular National Park, the highlights of this walking holiday include:

- Five days guided walking of between 4-5 hours per day excluding breaks.
- Spectacular views of this breathtaking island; amazing red granite mountains and mediterranean blue skies.
- Eagles, vultures, chamois and other wildlife.
- Discover the local cuisine of the region in authentic surroundings.
- An introduction to the traditional way of life and heritage of the region.
- We leave one afternoon free for you to explore further or relax in the town of Corte.

Summary

Known in French as the 'Island of Beauty', Corsica certainly lives up to it's reputation. And in the heart of it's Regional Natural Park, the Niolo Mountains offer the most stunning itineraries for hiking. There, bathed in the mediterranean light, are the magnificent Laricio pines and crystal-clear waterfalls, set against rugged and beautiful red granite mountains.

We're offering a collection of one-day hiking trips deep in the heart of the National Park giving you the chance to discover these wild and beautiful sites, and to find out more about the heritage, the traditional cuisine, and the way of life on this unique island.

Itinerary

Please note : The itinerary may have to be adapted to the level of fitness of the participants, or adverse weather/route conditions. This is at the discretion of your guide who, in the interest of safety, remains the sole decision-maker for the schedule.

Day 1 (Sunday) Your guide will pick you up from Bastia (port or airport) and take you via minibus to the mountain village of Calacuccia, 800 m /2,600 feet high in the heart of the Niolo valley. (1 ½ hrs drive, approx). To warm up gently, we will walk the Scala di Santa Regina, a gorge that has been carved out of the pink granite rock by its river's torrent.

Day 2 (Monday) : We will make our way across the Valdo-Niello forest - the biggest forest in Corsica that boasts numerous and magnificent Laricio pines (up to 40 m/130 ft high and 2 m/ 6.5 ft diameter). Our aim is to reach Lake Nino, nestled in a glacial valley and surrounded by peat-bogs.

Day 3 (Tuesday) : Following the famous GR20 up the Golo valley, we will make our way up above the pine forests to one of the highest of the Corsican mountains: la Paglia Orba (2525 m / 8,285 ft). We will lunch at the mountain refuge Ciottulu di I. Mori (at 2000 m/ 6,500 ft altitude), surrounded by magnificent views, and then return alongside the river's course of crystal-clear pools and waterfalls.

Day 4 (Wednesday) : We will take a minibus drive to the other side of Corte and up the Restonica gorges. At the end of the road, we can follow a path to Melo Lake, at the foot of a magnificent cirque (at 1710 m / 5,600 ft altitude)

Day 5 (Thursday) : A less demanding day for the weary legs. We will visit Corte, the historic capital of Corsica. You will then have half the day free to explore the citadelle's sites for yourself .

Day 6 (Friday) : A beautiful finish to the trip. We will set off from Calacuccia to walk the gentle ridges of Pascio (1600 m / 5,250 ft) - overlooking the village itself and its dammed lake, and to the south the Tavignano valley stretches below us.

Day 7 (Saturday) : We can organise this day to fit in with people's return travel arrangements; a simple visit of a village's old quarter, the city of Bastia, or a day on the beach, could round off the trip nicely.

Practical information

Minimum group size is 5, maximum 8. Minimum age: 18 years.

Your Guide : Philippe Stref is a French-qualified 'accompagnateur en montagne' (equivalent to 'Mountain Leader'). 47 years of age, he has been a mountaineer for over 25 years, having travelled extensively in Africa and South America. With a PhD in Hydro-Geology, he compliments his solid scientific grounding with a flair for nature. He hopes to share his interests with you, and also looks forward to learning from your input.

Level : These walks are geared to people who can walk 4-5 hours a day, with a maximum height gain of 800 m / 2,600 ft. In other words, for those who exercise regularly (walking or cycling for example).

On a technical level, we will be walking along sheep-tracks, with only occasional difficult passages - for which we will adopt a slow and relaxed approach.

None of the routes planned, under normal circumstances, will require you to put hand to rock / scramble, nor call for the use of a rope.

First Aid : Your guide is a trained First Aider (French-qualified 'Secouriste'), and will have the necessary kit with him. Please let us know of any particular health conditions (such as asthma, diabetes or allergies), though please note that it is your responsibility to bring any specific medication you need.

What to bring

The mountains are known for their sometimes sudden and dramatic changes in weather conditions. You should therefore come equipped for the cold and rain as well as the heat.

- Walking boots with good ankle support.
- Walking trousers, shorts.
- Waterproof/windproof jacket.
- Fleece or warm top, t-shirt.
- Sun hat and sun cream.
- water bottle, knife and spoon.
- day rucksack (30 litres approx, for your belongings and picnic lunch).
- Walking poles if you like to use them.
- Bin liner / rain protection for day rucksack.
- Head or pocket torch.
- Swimwear and towel

As well as a camera and binoculars, we suggest you bring a blank CD so that you can take a copy of digital photographs taken by the guide and any other members of the group.

Joining the trip

To join the trip, you need to make your own way to Bastia, from where you will be transferred by minibus to Calacuccia.

Passports

All nationalities require a full passport that is valid for the length of your stay. It is your responsibility to have the correct personal documents.

Insurance

It is a requirement of our terms and conditions that you have taken out appropriate travel insurance in respect of your holiday.

Extra expenses and spending money

Bring some euros with you to cover the cost of snacks, drinks etc.

Meals : We will eat all our evening meals at a restaurant in Calacuccia. Only the first day's lunch will be in a restaurant, otherwise we will be supplied with a packed lunch each morning. Please cater for your own snacks, and let us know in advance of any dietary needs, which we will do our best to accommodate.

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