



## BASTIA CORSICA

Corsica is one of the largest islands in the Mediterranean. It has been able to retain its charm and attraction by strictly limiting commercial development. Though it is one of the 26 regions of France as a “collectivité territoriale”, Corsica has a bit more autonomy.

This island has a very long and often tumultuous history dating back thousands of years. The coastal town of Bastia is Corsica's main commercial center. The port is the primary connecting point between the island and the French and Italian mainland. Bastia started out as a small refuge for boats seeking shelter from rough seas. Over the centuries the town and the island has been visited many times. Unfortunately, few of the “guests” had ever been officially invited and most of them long overstayed their welcome. Today the people of Bastia and Corsica sincerely greet visitors as they come to this beautiful island from around the world.



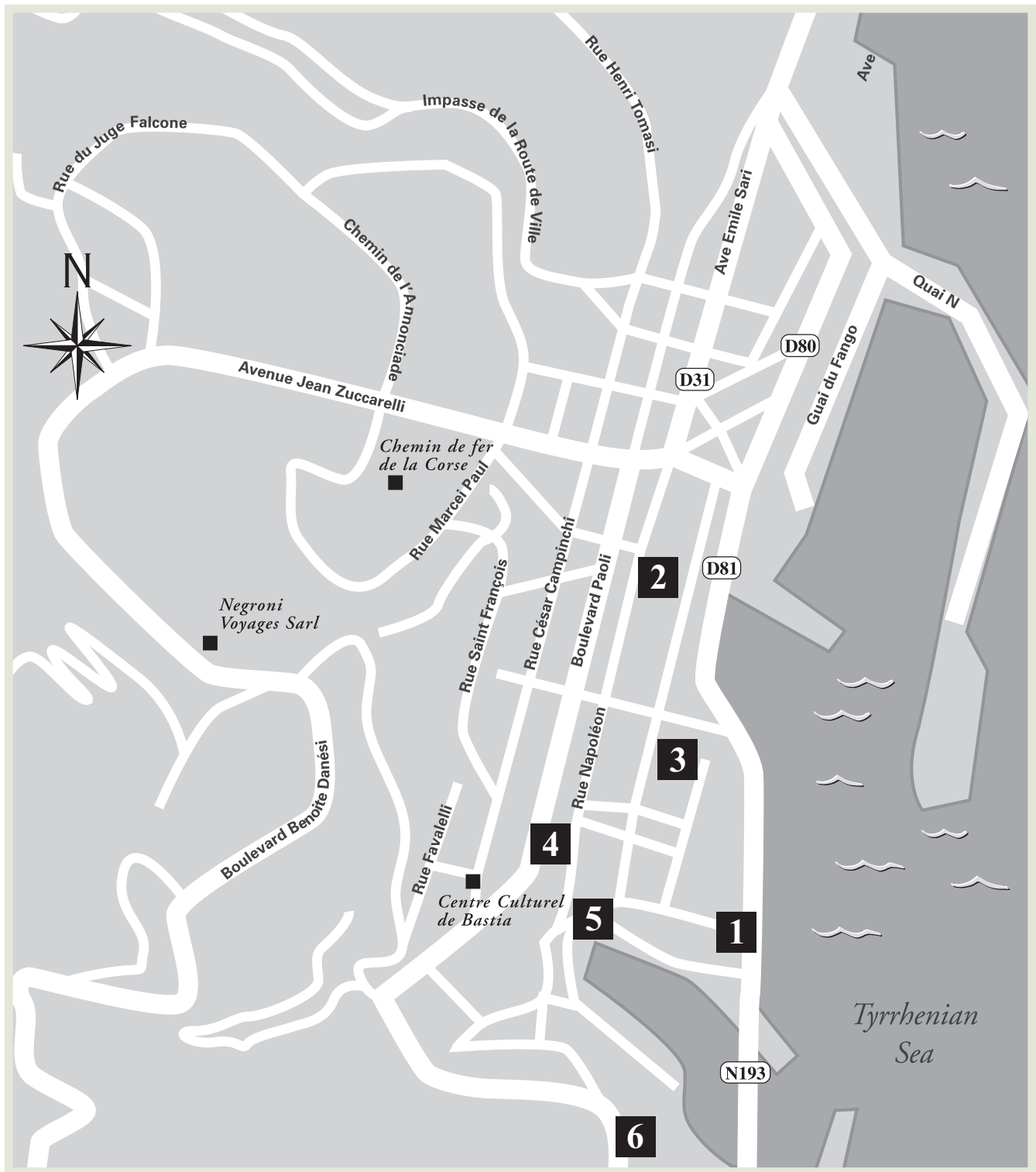
### HISTORY

Corsica has been inhabited since the Pre-Neolithic Age, as far back as 5,000 BC. History's list of the conquering invaders who swept across the island reads like a veritable who's who of every city-state, kingdom or country, empire, superpower, pontiff, potentate or pretender who ever wielded influence in the Mediterranean. It should come as no surprise to learn of the Corsicans' deep longing for independence.

As far back as 1200 BC the Phoenicians came to this island from the coastal region of Syria and Lebanon. There were Iberians from the western Mediterranean and Ligurians from the shores of northwestern Italy. Corsica was in the middle of a major trade route and her strategic value was recognized by the Etruscans and the Carthaginians. The Greeks were growing wine on Corsica thousands of years ago. When the Romans took the island in the 1st century BC a period of peace and prosperity followed over the next hundreds of years.

With the collapse of the Western Roman Empire in the 5th Century AD, chaos became the rule of the age as the Ostrogoths and Vandals took the island. The history of Corsica models the history of the power struggle in the Mediterranean. The Byzantines of the Eastern Roman Empire took Corsica yet peace did not prevail. As Byzantium slowly crumbled the Germanic Lombards were the next to claim Corsica, and all the while the island tried to withstand the attacks of Muslim Saracen and Barbary Coast pirates. By the mid 11th century, Pope Gregory VII virtually signed away Corsica to the Italian city-state of Pisa. They ruled until the Republic of Genoa, their arch rival, took the island in the late 1200s.

The French landed in the mid 1500s by which time the island was so devastated by centuries of invasion and disease that it was nearly depopulated. Though Genoa managed to maintain possession of Corsica, with the rapid expansion of the Islamic Ottoman Turks, many of the Greeks from Con-



stantinople and the Eastern Roman Empire fled to the nearly desolate island. Beginning in 1729 the people of Corsica had had enough. By the middle of the century a nationalist leader arose by the name of Pascal Paoli and Corsica won her independence, even if it was to last for little over a decade. In 1768 the Treaty of Versailles gave Corsica to the French and on May 8, 1769 armed resistance by the independence minded islanders came to an end. Three months later, on August 15th, in the coastal Corsican town of Ajaccio a young woman by the name of Marie-Letizia presented her husband Carlo Buonaparte with a son. They named him Nabulio and the fate of Corsica and the world changed forever.

## BASTIA PLACES OF INTEREST

- 1** The **Harbor** is a wonderful place to stroll. To the south are the pleasure boats and to the north are the cruise ship and ferry docks.
- 2** **St Nicolas Square** is the social center of the town.
- 3** **Oratoire St Roch** was built in the Baroque style in 1604. The interior of the church is beautifully ornate.



**4 Oratoire de l'Immaculee Conception** was built in 1611. The church is highly decorated in the Baroque style. There is a copy of the painting "The Immaculate Conception" by the famous Spanish artist Bartolomé Esteban Murillo. The sacristy contains an attractive art collection.

**5 Saint Jean Baptiste** was built in the 1600s. Famous for its twin spires, this is the largest church in Corsica. This church also has a nice art collection.

**6 Le Palais des Gouverneurs** dates to the 1500s though the original bastion upon which it was built dates back to the 1300s. There is a nice little museum in the palace.

### Beyond Bastia

**Cap Corse** is a gorgeous peninsula with rolling hills and mountains jutting into the sea. There are numerous quaint little fishing villages scattered among the many bays and inlets.



**Corte** is a lovely town in the interior of the island. Set in the mountains surrounding the Golo River Valley, Corte played an important role in foundation of Corsican nationalism in the 1700s.



## SHORE EXCURSIONS

To make the most of your visit to Bastia and surrounding areas we suggest you take one of our organized Shore Excursions. For information concerning tour content and pricing, consult your Shore Excursion Brochure or contact the Shore Excursion Desk. When going ashore, be advised to take only necessary items and secure any valuables onboard.

## LOCAL CUSTOMS

**Bargaining:** Prices in stores and markets are generally fixed.

**Tipping:** A 10% tip is the custom, despite the fact there might be an automatic service charge on the bill.

**Local Cuisine:** The cuisine on Corsica is a wonderful combination of time honored island dishes influenced by French and Italian styles. In coastal villages sea food is fresh. In the mountain towns and villages a more rustic and traditional "home cooking" may be prevalent. There are many local products of incredible quality. This is primarily due to the small scale of farming and breeding of goats and sheep. Corsican pork (domesticated and wild), cheese, honey and wine are among a few of the delicious products found on the island. Several local dishes are: Stufato, a steaming meat stew, usually lamb or goat, often served with fresh pasta. Pulenda, a hearty polenta made from the flour of island chestnuts. Aziminu, a popular fish soup or bouillabaisse. Coppa, Lonzu, Salumu and Prisuttu are among Corsica's famous dried pork products. Niolo, Brocciu and Brin d'amour are some of the island's most popular cheese.

**Drink Specialties:** The first vineyards were planted on Corsica well over 2,000 years ago. The wines produced on the island are wonderful. The proof of the quality is that there is little ever left over to export. The Muscat of Corsica is exceptional.

## SHOPPING

Boulevard Paoli and Rue César Campinchi are the main shopping streets in Bastia.

## LOCAL CURRENCY

The unit of currency in Corsica is the Euro. All Euro notes and coins are legal tender in all countries of the EU. Most stores accept major credit cards ATM's are usually available, especially in heavily trafficked tourist areas. At smaller establishments cash may be required.

## POST OFFICE

There is a Post Office located in the Place Saint Nicolas, in the heart of Bastia.

## TOURIST INFORMATION

A Visitors Information Center is also located in the Place Saint Nicolas.

## TRANSPORTATION

Taxis and rental cars are available in Bastia.

## USEFUL WORDS AND PHRASES

The official language of Corsica is French. The language native to the island and still spoken throughout the mountain towns and villages is known "U Corsu". Together with its own vocabulary, U Corsu seems to combine Medieval Etruscans and Genoese. Once banned by the French, today the language is taught in Corsica's schools.

**English - French**

