



Cycle Corsica
the beautiful island

7 day cycling tour with Alpine Cols
8-16 April & 9-17 September 2023



Corsica: l'Ile de la Beauté

A cycling trip you will never forget

Not for nothing do the French call Corsica the “island of beauty”. Its unique geology and position bless it with seven distinct ecosystems, ranging from sea-level to alpine, and regular rainfall, making it particularly rich and varied in vegetation.

The Corsicans are extremely hospitable people who delight in sharing their love for their island home. Read (or re-read) *‘Asterix in Corsica’* for some finely-drawn insights into the Corsican character!

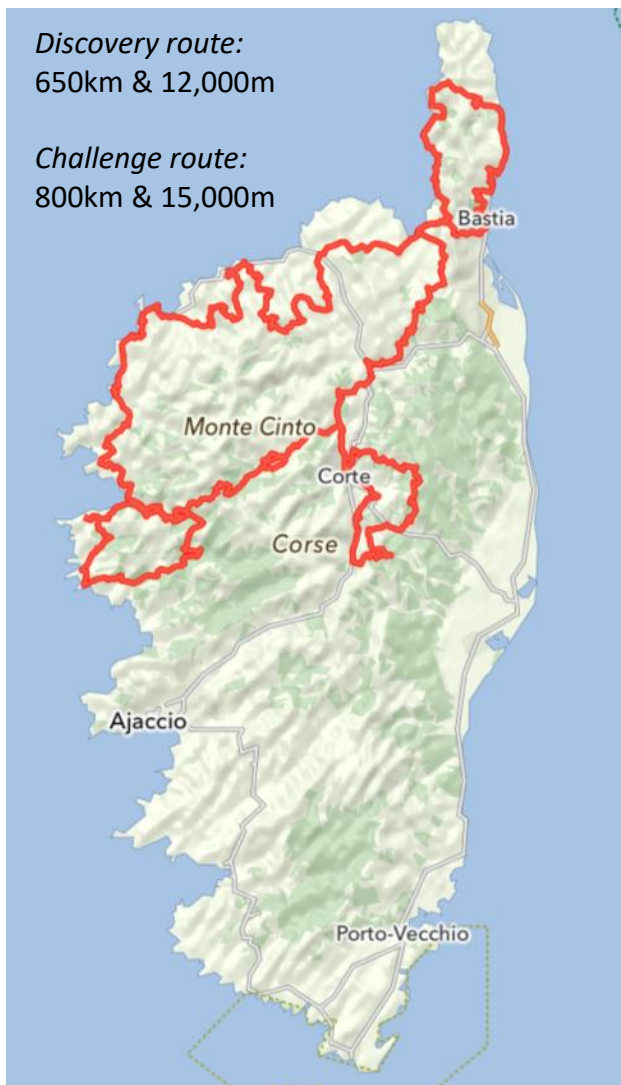
The island’s turbulent human history has resulted in a large number of tiny, remote mountain villages where time has stood still for centuries.

Corsican food is legendary, with delicious hams, sausages and cheeses accompanied by sun-drenched vegetables and fruit, fish caught in the surrounding sea and of course a choice of excellent local wines, beers and other drinks.

Like the Pyrenees – but even more so – we frequently encounter livestock on the roads, including beautiful long-haired goats, sheep, cows and often-comical pigs, sometimes crossed (deliberately or not) with their wild brethren.

And the cycling? We have left the best for last...

For us, Corsica is THE best cycling destination in the Mediterranean, and is quite possibly the best island destination in the world. The combination of roads, scenery, hotels, food, weather and (relative) accessibility is quite simply unbeatable. We have been visiting Corsica for summer holidays for more than 30 years: we can’t wait to share it with you!



Is this trip for you?

This not a trip for beginner cyclists, but **you do not need to be either fast or young**. Similar trips have been completed by many men and women in their sixties and even seventies.

You can choose each day whether to ride the **Discovery route**, which is typically ~90km and 1,700m, or the **Challenge route**, which is tougher at ~115km and 2,150m per day.

Small groups will form and you will be able to ride with people of a similar speed.

The main quality required is endurance and the ability to ride for 4 to 7 hours per day for 7 days. We will have our own masseur to help with recovery.

This is not a low budget trip. **We stay in the best available hotels (four 3*, one 2*), eat excellent meals and provide a high level of service**. Our clients demand nothing less!

The rides are fully supported and at your own pace. **All our guides are qualified cycling coaches**. Their primary role is to ensure you have a safe and enjoyable experience.

You can of course **ask the coaches for tips and feedback on your cycling**, with suggestions for pacing, descending, nutrition and recovery. Equally, you are free to ride as you wish (so long as you do not endanger others).

The support vehicles are nearby if you need support, and you are welcome to jump aboard if you are too tired to complete the ride.

The trip is absolutely non-competitive. There will be plenty of time to take photographs or to stop for a coffee, if you so wish.



8-16 April and 9-17 September

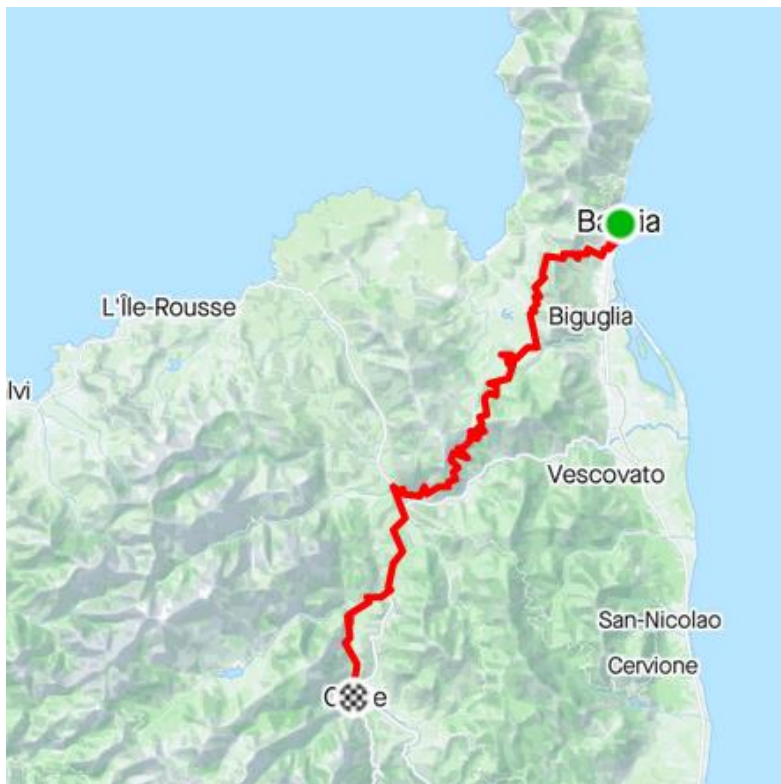
| DAY | RIDE | DISCOVERY ROUTE | | CHALLENGE ROUTE | |
|------|---|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|---------------|
| | | KM | M+ | KM | M+ |
| Sat | <i>Arrival (nearest airport Bastia)</i> | | | | |
| Sun | 1. Bastia to Corte | 96 | 2,100 | 117 | 2,670 |
| Mon | 2. Corte to Corte | 89 | 1,700 | 116 | 2,260 |
| Tues | 3. Corte to Porto | 84 | 1,440 | 101 | 1,840 |
| Wed | 4. Porto to Porto | 89 | 2,270 | 118 | 2,820 |
| Thu | 5. Porto to L'Ile Rousse | 114 | 1,490 | 128 | 1,580 |
| Fri | 6. L'Ile Rousse to Saint Florent | 77 | 1,320 | 102 | 1,650 |
| Sat | 7. Saint Florent to Bastia | 102 | 1,570 | 115 | 2,170 |
| Sun | <i>Departure (nearest airport Bastia)</i> | 651 | 11,890 | 797 | 14,990 |

N.B. There are NO minibus transfers planned during your stay. However, the option to jump in the bus is always there if you are too tired, or if the weather turns bad. See next pages for details of each stage. Routes are subject to change depending on weather and road conditions.



Emmanuelle in the descent.
Bocca di Bigornu (Stage 1)

Stage 1: Bastia to Corte



We gather in the port city of Bastia, and begin our first ride by rounding the old port and the citadel, a photographer's delight in the early-morning light. We then climb steeply through the outskirts of the town to the Bocca di Teghime (536m), where the Discovery and Challenge routes diverge.

Whichever route you take, you will enjoy stunning views across the NW of the island as we climb higher and higher to the Bocca di Bigornu (885m). On the way we cross a geological divide where the grey-green multi-layered schists of the NE give way to the granite that composes most of the island. We climb through thick scrub (the famous Corsican *maquis*), to chestnut forest and finally above the treeline.

The descent is on a typically narrow road, through several of the tiny mountain villages for which the island is famous.

Our destination is Corte, the historic capital and cultural heart of the island. Our hotel is in the centre, close to the citadel and a wide choice of cafés, bars and restaurants.

Discovery route: 96km | 2,100m



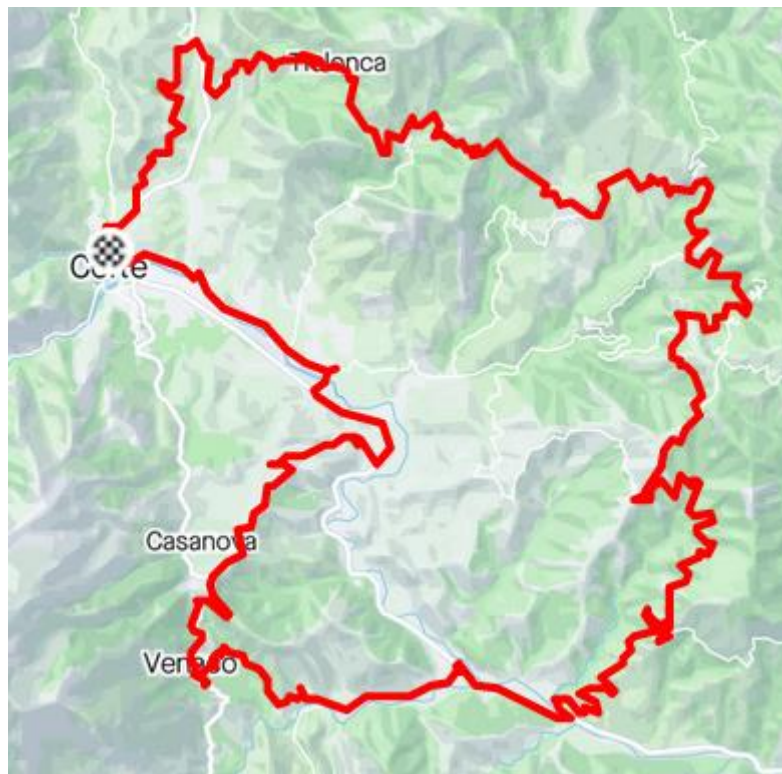
Challenge route: 117km | 2,670m





Meeting the local inhabitants
Poggio-di-Venaco (Stage 2)

Stage 2: Corte to Corte



Corte is a great place to stay so we will spend a second night here, and ride the mountainous area to the SW of the town.

The first climb takes us through Poggio-di-Venaco, where the legendary count Ugo Colonna built his palace in the 10th century. You are more likely to hear Corsican spoken here than French.

The Challenge route heads further south to climb the col de Morello (814m), while the Discovery route takes a more direct route. We will all come together in time for the first feed stop.

The next tiny village we ride through is called Altiani. Perched on a mountain side, the village is surrounded by terraced, walled gardens full of fig trees, pink oleander and orange trumpet vine. There's a tiny café under the plane trees.

Our balcony road affords us splendid views across the valley to the south and west. We pass through the impressive village of Tralonca and then begin our final descent to Corte.

Discovery route: 89km | 1,700m



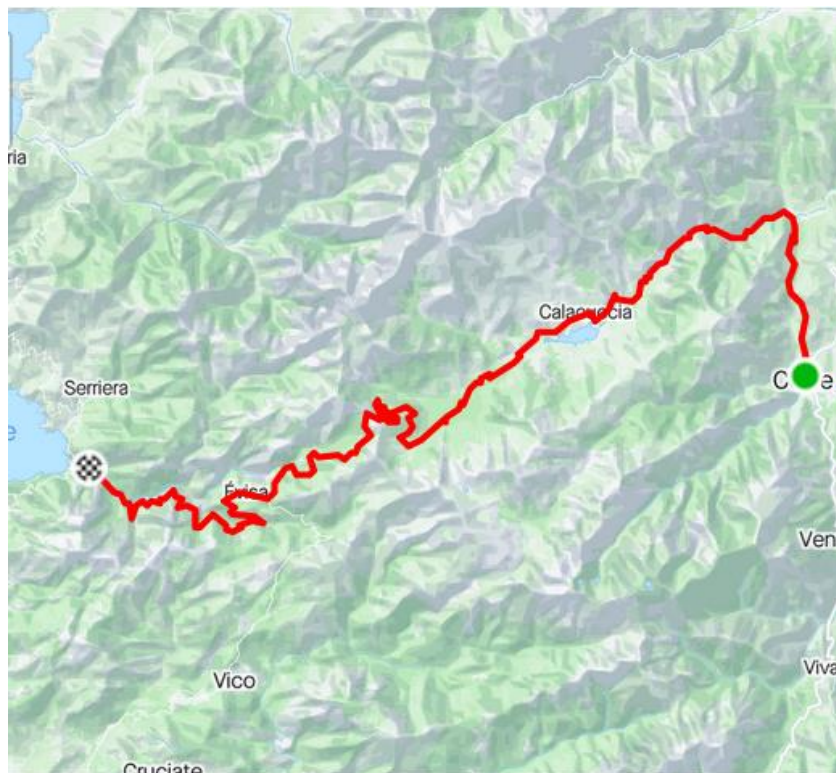
Challenge route: 116km | 2,260m





The Gorges de Scala di Santa Regina, on the way to the Bocca di Verghju (Stage 3)

Stage 3: Corte to Porto



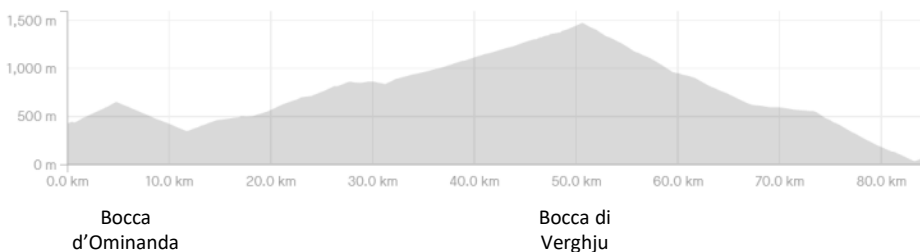
After the short and fairly easy climb to the Bocca d'Ominanda (638m), we descend, cross the river Golo and begin the long climb to the Bocca di Verghju, the highest col in Corsica (1,477m).

The first part of the climb is up the Gorges de Scala di Santa Regina. The scenery is outstanding. The road was cut by hand into the red granite and twists and turns as it follows the river Golo. The gradient averages around 4% and is never more than 5%.

The Gorges lead us to the Niolu, a remote, long-time inaccessible region that was always a centre of resistance to would-be invaders. The road flattens out here.

The second part of the climb is on a lovely road, winding up through an old pine forest with impressive trees, many of them at least 25m high. The descent is long and sinuous, first through the pine forest and then the amazing granite formations of the Gorges de la Spelunca.

Discovery route: 84km | 1,440m



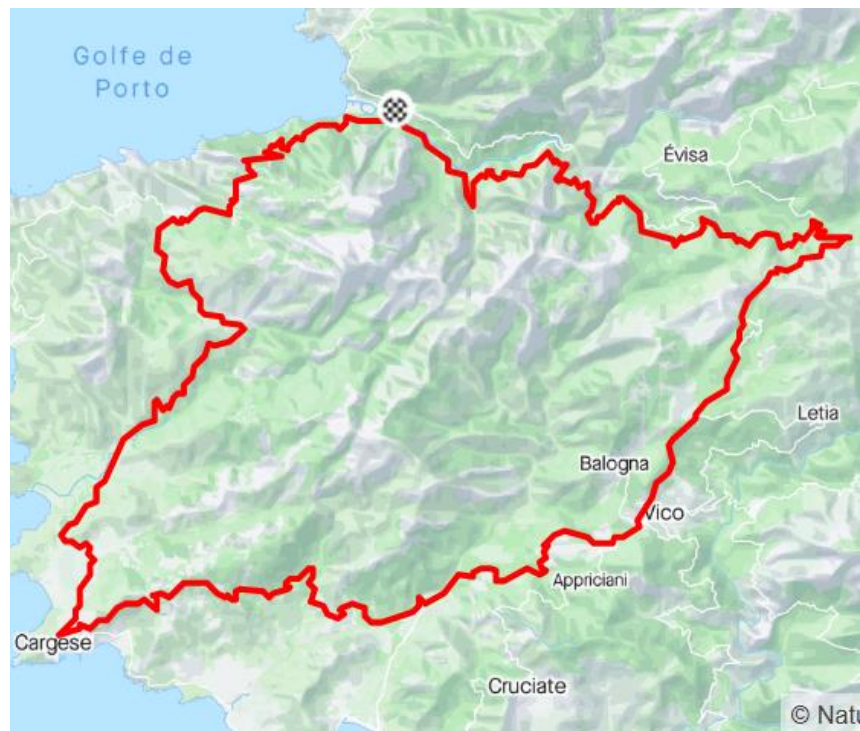
Challenge route: 101km | 1,840m





The col de Sevi (Stage 4)

Stage 4: Porto to Porto



It's very hard to pick a highlight, but this stage might just be the one. We begin with the long climb to the col de Sevi (1,102m), first through the red granite of the Gorges de la Spelunca and then the centuries-old chestnut plantations, which date from the times of Genoese rule over the island.

The descent is fast and easy, bringing us to a delightful narrow road through the *maquis*, lined with wild flowers and heavy with scent, up, over and down to Cargèse.

From here we follow the 2013 Tour de France Stage 3 route over the col de San Martino (433m) and on to the world-famous *Calenche di Piana*. This is a photographer's dream of tortured red granite, contrasting starkly with the blue sky, deep blue sea and green vegetation. It is particularly stunning in the evening as the sunset bathes the orange-red rocks in warm light.

The final descent brings us back to Porto for a second night.

Discovery route: 89km | 2,270m



Challenge route: 118km | 2,820m





"I crossed the Calanche di Piana as night was falling. I stopped, astonished by these amazing rocks of pink granite, four hundred metres high, strange, tortured, bent, eaten away by time, bloody under the last fires of sunset and taking on all shapes like a fairy tale fantasy people, petrified by some supernatural power. I saw alternately two monks standing, of a gigantic size; a bishop seated, crook in hand, mitre on his head; prodigious figures, a lion crouching at the side of the road, a woman suckling her child and an immense, horned, grimacing devil's head, no doubt guardian of this crowd imprisoned in stone."

– Guy de Maupassant, *Le monastère de Corbara* (1880)



The Calanche di Piana (Stage 4)

Stage 5: Porto to L'Ile Rousse



Stage 5 is the longest of the week: a series of relatively short climbs up and down and in and out around the coast, with more breath-taking views of the pink granite coastline.

The highest point on the coast road is the Bocca di Palmarella, at only 405m, but the climbing soon adds up over the kilometres as the road rises and falls, always in sight of the sea.

Soon after Calvi we turn inland and climb through Montemaggiore, another of Corsica's many hilltop villages, famous for being the site of the final licentious act of Don Juan before he gave himself over to good works.

We cross the Bocca di Salvi (509m) soon after the village, then begin our descent to the charming port of L'Ile Rousse, where we will spend the night.

There's a shady central square with games of boules, but more importantly several outlets for excellent home-made ice-cream!

Discovery route: 114km | 1,490m



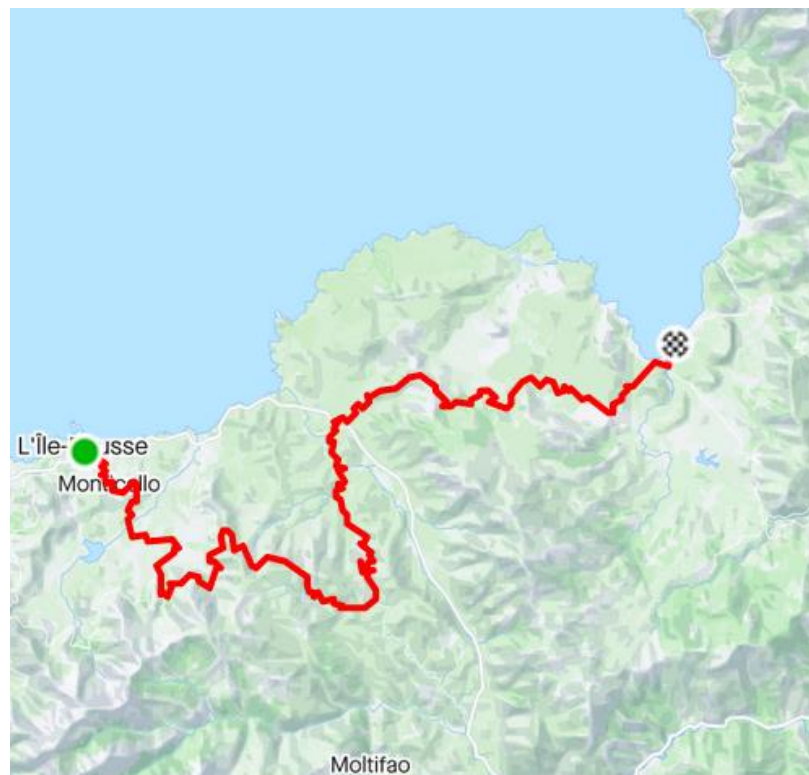
Challenge route: 128km | 1,580m





Montemaggiore (Stage 5)

Stage 6: L'Île Rousse to Saint Florent



There are lovely views back across the port as we climb to Monticello. This is an easy warm-up before the main effort of the day, which is all the way to the Bocca di Battaglia (1,101m) for those who accept the challenge!

This is a tough climb, especially the last 5km (which are at 9%-10%) and adds 25km to the Discovery route. The alternative is to do the first third of the climb and then follow a balcony road before going directly to the feed station on the Bocca di San Colombanu (692m).

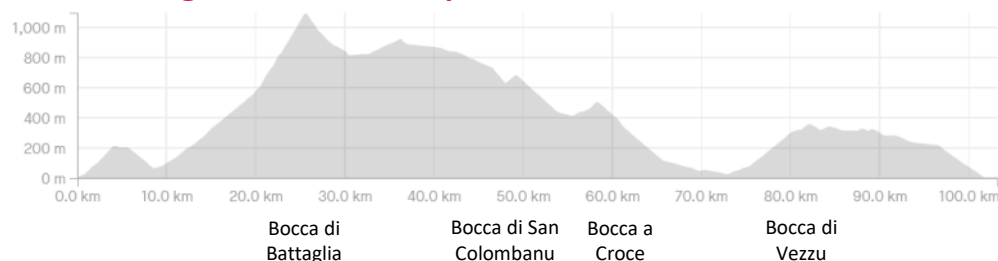
We then enjoy a delightful descent before turning off to a tiny road, making a short climb to the Bocca a Croce (506m) and then a long false-flat descent through Novella.

The last part of the ride includes the climb to the Bocca di Vezzu, from where we cross the *désert d'Agriate*. Not a real desert. the term refers to the rural depopulation of this once fertile area, where olives, figs, almonds, lemons and most of the island's wheat used to grow.

Discovery route: 77km | 1,320m



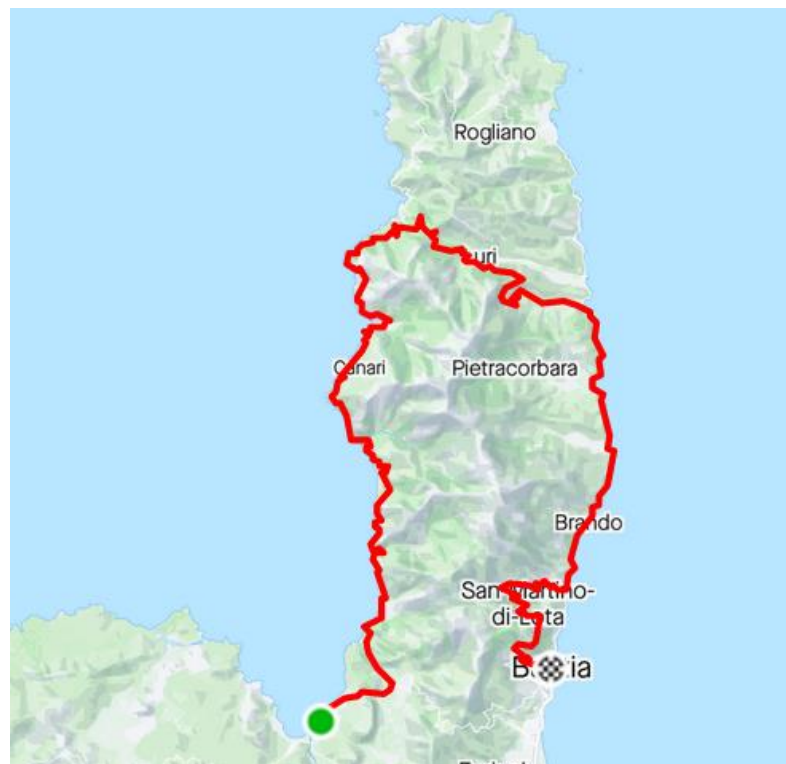
Challenge route: 102km | 1,650m





The col de Battaglia (Stage 6)

Stage 7: Saint Florent to Bastia



Our final stage takes us up the Cap Corse, yet another feast for the eyes on this amazing island. For most of the ride we follow the coast road. The road goes up and down but is never steep or challenging.

We pass through the picturesque village of Nonza, with an inviting café and an old watch tower. We keep riding for 45km along the coast before cutting inland to climb to the Bocca di Santa Lucia (381m), the crossing point between the two sides of the Cap Corse. There is a sign on the col to Seneca's Tower, said to be the place where the Roman Stoic philosopher spent most of his time in exile in Corsica, between 41 and 49 AD.

As we cross to the east the Italian island of Capraia is clearly visible, with Elba further to the south, where Napoleon endured the first of his two island exiles in 1814.

The final climb of the trip is to the viewpoint in San Martino, high above the port of Bastia. One last descent and it's all over!

Discovery route: 102km | 1,570m



Challenge route: 115km | 2,170m





The Cap Corse (Stage 7)



Services & Support

Daily briefing

- We provide a detailed briefing each evening, complete with a weather forecast, route profile and route conditions. During the ride we comment on local history, geology and of course the island's amazing vegetation and animal life.

Coaching

- Alpine Cols doesn't employ guides, only qualified cycling coaches. As such we are always available for coaching advice on any aspects of cycling performance.

Feed stations

- We provide two feed stations per day, the first mid-morning and the second early afternoon. The food is sourced locally, fresh and fully adapted to endurance cycling. Let us know if you have any special requirements or food allergies.

Support vehicle(s)

- If the group is at least six persons, there will be two vehicles (otherwise just one). The vehicle(s) will transport your baggage between the hotels, set up the feed stations, deal with any mechanicals, and pick you up if you are too tired to continue.

Laundry

- Our hotel in Porto has self-service laundry and drying facilities available for our use. We will stay there two nights, after Stages 3 and 4.



PACKAGE PRICES (2023)

From **Sat April 8 to Sun April 16**

- Twin-share: **€3,125**
- Single supplement: **€325**

[BOOK
NOW](#)

From **Sat Sept. 9 to Sun Sept. 17**

- Twin-share: **€3,350**
- Single supplement: **€375**

[BOOK
NOW](#)

5% reduction for returning clients

10% reduction for a second trip in the same year

ADDITIONAL NIGHTS

Please contact us for your personal quote if you would like to stay additional nights in Corsica.

WHAT IS INCLUDED IN YOUR PACKAGE

- Accommodation, in the best available 3* hotels (one 2*)
- Meals (breakfast, lunch and dinner, including drinks with the meals)
- On-the-bike guiding, and coaching if desired
- On-the-road support vehicle with free energy drinks and snacks. If there are seven persons or more, there will be two vehicles.
- Mechanical assistance
- Photographs taken during the week (digital copies)

WHAT IS NOT INCLUDED

- Travel to/from Bastia (Corsica)
- Airport transfers
- Bicycle hire: ask for help with this
- Minibar or drinks at the hotel bar
- Coffee or snacks during café stops
- Massages (optional extra)



The road from Porto to the north (Stage 5)

Practical matters

Airport transfers

- The closest airport is Bastia. Taxis are available to take you to and from the hotel, which is in the town of Bastia.

Weather

- The normal daytime maximum temperature in April is 18°C, whereas in September it is normally around 26°C. It is of course cooler at altitude.
- Rain is possible in either month but more likely in April.
- Bring cycling clothes appropriate for both wet and dry conditions and for temperatures between 0° and 30°C.

Shops, currency and language

- We have chosen the hotels carefully for their quality, their character and their location. There are always local cafés, pastry shops and supermarkets close by.
- The currency in France is the Euro. Visa and Mastercard are widely accepted or can be used to withdraw Euros from a bank machine.
- English is reasonably well understood, but not by everybody!

Staying over

- It would be a pity to arrive at the last minute and leave at the first opportunity: there is so much to see and do in this beautiful part of the world! If you would like to extend your trip, please let us know and we will suggest some options.



The Gorges de la Spelunca and the village of Ota (Stage 4)

Suggested Kit List

| ITEM | CHECK |
|------------------------------------|-------|
| Bike (unless hiring) | |
| Spare tyres & inner tubes (2 each) | |
| Spare brake pads | |
| Spare derailleur hanger | |
| Any special tools or spare parts | |
| Lights (front and back) | |
| Charger for electronic gears | |
| Heart rate chest strap | |
| Cycling computer & charger | |
| Mobile phone & charger, adaptor | |
| Cycling helmet | |
| Water bottles (2) | |
| Base layer short sleeve | |
| Base layer long sleeve | |
| Cycling jerseys short sleeve | |
| Cycling jerseys long sleeve | |
| Cycling shorts | |
| Cycling tights ¾ or long | |

| ITEM | CHECK |
|-------------------------------------|-------|
| Cycling socks | |
| Cycling cap or balaclava | |
| Cycling gloves (summer) | |
| Cycling gloves (long, waterproof) | |
| Cycling gloves (long, cold weather) | |
| Arm warmers and leg warmers | |
| Warm waterproof jacket | |
| Lightweight rain jacket | |
| Windproof jacket | |
| Cycling sun glasses | |
| Cycling shoes (with spare cleats) | |
| Waterproof overshoes | |
| Chamois cream | |
| Sun cream | |
| Personal pharmacy | |
| Insurance | |
| Medical certificate | |
| Day bag (for the van) | |

Additional kit recommendations

Day bag

Your day bag should contain anything you might need during the day's ride but don't want to carry from the start. Bear in mind that the van may NOT be close to you later in the day when you need it, so you need to think ahead and be able to carry what you need on your bike. Autonomy is less risky than dependence!

- Overshoes
- Arm & leg warmers
- Gloves (at least two: waterproof and thermal)
- Neck warmer and riding cap/thermal bonnet
- Jackets & gilets: at least three: thermal, waterproof, lightweight.
- Spare parts: cleats, tyre, inner tubes, brake pads
- Bike lights, front & back (required for tunnels)
- Sunscreen and chamois cream.

The key to riding in the high mountains in variable weather is layering. Several options of light, compact layers are much better than one heavy jacket.

Personal pharmacy

- Magnesium (may help with recovery)
- Multi-vitamins (may help with recovery)
- Skin-wound dressings (vital for dressing minor cuts, burns or road-rash; hydrocolloid are best)
- Anti-inflammatory pills (may help with soft-tissue injuries)
- Any other tried-and-tested personal items



Golfe de Galéria (Stage 5)

Tips before travel

Preparing your bike

- Make sure you have appropriate gears. We recommend a **compact chainset (50/34)** and a **cassette suitable for steep climbs** (such as **11/32** or better).
- The bike should have new puncture-resistant tyres. Many of the roads have a rough, granular surface and sharp flints are common, especially if it has rained recently. We recommend at least 27mm tyres, better still 30-35mm. You can run these at lower pressure for increased comfort.
- Please get your bike serviced by a qualified mechanic. Tell the mechanic that you will be riding 700 km or so through the mountains so the bike needs a thorough check, including the bottom bracket, the head tube and the wheels as well as the obvious brakes, gears, cables & chain.
- Ride the bike for at least 50km after the service to make sure any stretch in the cables or other kinks are ironed out.

Travelling with your bike

- If you are new to travelling with your bike, give yourself plenty of time to pack it, preferably the day before travel.
- Follow the instructions of the bike box manufacturer carefully.
- Remember to reduce the pressure in your tyres and leave the CO2 cylinders at home.
- Include any special tools required to re-assemble your bike.
- If you need help setting up your bike on arrival we will be happy to assist.



Punta Rossa (Stage 5)

Insurance

Accident & illness

Please note that you must have insurance in place in order to cover the cost of assistance and repatriation in the event of accident or illness. The insurance must provide specific cover for cycling and should cover the following risks:

- medical expenses,
- personal accident,
- personal liability,
- emergency rescue,
- repatriation if you become too ill to travel,
- cancellation or curtailment of your holiday,
- travel delay,
- loss or delay to your baggage,
- loss or theft of personal effects and legal expenses.

If you are based in the UK, we suggest you contact one of the specialist cycling insurance firms.

Cancellation

You should also take out cancellation insurance to cover the cost of your cycling holiday should you be forced to cancel for any reason. Cancellation charges will be applied on the following scale:

- | | |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| – More than 8 weeks prior to your holiday start date: | Deposit only |
| – 4-8 Weeks prior to your holiday start date: | 50% of the total amount invoiced |
| – Less than 4 weeks prior to your holiday start date: | 100% of the total amount invoiced |



Speloncato, one of the
numerous hilltop villages we
will ride through in Corsica



Contact us with your questions!
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