

Itinerary
Corsica & Côte d'Azur - 2015
August 24 – September 7

Corsica and Provence are ideal destinations for beach-lovers and water sports, mountain and hiking, fans charming remote villages and cities alike. It has fantastic cuisine and wine. And it's easy to get to from Paris. Below is my itinerary for a two-week trip starting in southern Corsica and traveling through the mountainous center to the northeast of the island, then across on the ferry to Nice and around Provence and the Côte d'Azur. But you could easily divide this trip into two 1-week vacations or even weekend or long weekend trips if you're starting in Europe.

If you're a big hiker, be sure to look at my other two Corsica itineraries on hiking the GR20 (north and south).

Date	To	Flight/Hotel/Car Details	Cost	Notes/Comments
Monday, August 24th	Fly Boston to Paris to Figari	<i>Flight:</i> Depart Boston 8:45pm – 9:25am (Paris). Depart Paris 1pm – 2:50pm (Figari)	Flights were around \$1000 round trip	
Tuesday, August 25th	Night in Bonifacio, Hotel Santateresa	Land 2:50pm in Figari; rent car (Europcar) <p style="color: red;">Be a bit wary of the Europcar here—check the car carefully and don't settle for a car that isn't new and what you reserved. Trust me, you do <i>not</i> want a large car in Corsica. The smaller the better. I don't recommend driving in Corsica unless you are a very confident driver.</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Santateresa, Quartier Saint François, Bonifacio 20169 +33495731132</p> <p style="color: red;">The Santateresa is a great hotel for the price you pay. I had stayed at the Hotel Genovese on my last visit to Bonifacio and it was fabulous, but it's easily twice as expensive and only a 5-minute walk closer to the center of the old (upper) town. The Hotel Genovese might be worth it if you are going to take advantage of the pool, but if you're not set on having a pool, you can save a lot of money at the Santateresa. The breakfast was extra but well worth it.</p>	<i>Car:</i> \$178.83 + ~€79 for one-way fee <i>Hotel:</i> €380/2 nights	<i>Day:</i> Explore Bonifacio <p style="color: red;">We ended up dining both nights at U Castille (http://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g612416-d1330348-Reviews-U_Castille-Bonifacio_Corse_du_Sud_Corsica.html), because it was so good. Though the restaurant has multiple locations all near each other so it felt as though we went to two different restaurants. I highly recommend reserving one of the few balcony tables in advance.</p>
Wednesday, August 26th	Night in Bonifacio, Hotel Santateresa			<i>Day:</i> Boat trip to Îles Lavezzi <p style="color: red;">Wednesday morning we took a boat trip to the Lavezzi islands. No need to reserve in advance—just go down to the port and there are always boats leaving. They will bring you to the island, then you have the option of taking boats back every hour throughout the afternoon. We chose to just explore for a couple of hours, swim and head back but if you bring your own food and water and beach gear (there's nowhere to buy anything on the island and no shelter from the sun), you could stay all day.</p> <p style="color: red;">In the afternoon, we took the footpath from the old town of Bonifacio to the east, towards the lighthouse. You get spectacular views of the cliffs and of the old town looking back.</p>

Thursday, August 27th	Night at Domaine des Trois Roses outside Ajaccio	http://www.domainedestroisroses.com/ Tel: 06 07 98 69 23 domainedestroisroses@gmail.com N 41.96878 E 8.85455 (Arrive between 5pm and 7pm) Domaine des Trois Roses is <i>not</i> easy to find, even with the directions provided. They could use a sign out front! But once we found it, we were happy. The rooms are comfortable (though a bit hot in summer) and the pool is fantastic. The guesthouse has a low-key atmosphere—you feel that you are just houseguests of Marie Claude, who is very welcoming.	<i>Hotel:</i> €100	<i>Day:</i> Stop in Sartène We stopped in the historic town of Sartène for lunch and to explore the old town. It's a quick but worthwhile stop between Bonifacio and Ajaccio. The tourist office in Sartène gave us a map that guided us along a loop of picturesque villages starting on the D19 from Propriano. <i>Dinner:</i> Marie Claude from Trois Roses had booked us at nearby restaurant, A Casetta (http://www.restaurant-acasetta.com/), that was fantastic. It's a bit on the fancy side but well worth the slight splurge.
Friday, August 28th	Night at Casa di Lucia	<i>Hotel:</i> Casa di Lucia, Mazzola, 20212, +33495359084 http://www.chambre-hotes-corse.fr/fr/ Casa di Lucia is one of the most memorable guesthouses I have stayed in. The drive up into the mountains is only for confident drivers (I have no idea how you'd get there in the snow and Casa di Lucia is open year round!) but it's well signposted. Our room was a creatively decorated suite with a balcony looking out over the mountains. The guesthouse and the pool are perched on the side of a steep slope and the views are magnificent. The pool gets great afternoon sun and the restaurant shares the same view across the valley. The owners have plans to enclose part of the restaurant and expand the pool terrace. I highly recommend eating all your meals at Casa di Lucia—they will even make up a brown bag lunch if you like. The food is incredible and you wouldn't want to have to drive off the mountain at night anyways.	<i>Hotel:</i> €310/2 nights	<i>Day:</i> Stop in Corte Corte is the main city in Corsica's mountainous center and makes for a great lunch stop and an hour or two of exploring. It's well worth walking up the hill for views of the Citadelle perched on the top of a rock outcropping.
Saturday, August 29th	Night at Casa di Lucia			We spent a good bit of time at Casa di Lucia hanging out on our balcony and at the pool and just relaxing. The middle day, we hiked along the Mare and Mare trail that you can catch a mere 10 or so yards from the front of the guesthouse. We followed the guesthouse owner's suggestion and hiked to upper Mazzola, across the plateau and down to the town of Pianello and back. It was about 4-5 hours round trip and a beautiful hike.

Sunday, August 30th	Night in Bastia, Hotel Les Voyageurs	<p><i>Hotel:</i> Les Voyageurs, 9 Avenue Marechal Sebastiani, Bastia 20200 +33495349080</p> <p>Les Voyageurs started out as a bit of a disaster but they made up for it by undercharging us in the end. They lost our reservation and failed to reserve our boat and jeep tours as they had confirmed. But in the end, they did find us a room and upgraded us, and after some discussion finally were able to book us on a boat and jeep tour last minute. And a very nice woman at reception even drove us back to the ferry on the last day in her own car. The bottom line: it's a fine hotel (and in a good location) if you stick with online booking, but don't be duped into booking through the hotel's marketing team directly.</p>	<p><i>Hotel:</i> €549/3 nights + 2 excursions + 2 breakfasts + parking</p>	<p><i>Dinner (best to reserve a balcony seat in advance):</i> Le Lavezzi (8, rue Saint Jean, 04 95 31 05 73, http://www.restaurant-lavezzi.fr)</p> <p>We took the long route from Casa di Lucia back to Bastia, through a number of mountain villages and beautiful countryside. We drove up to Erbalunga on Cap Corse for a late lunch before going into Bastia.</p> <p>I had eaten at Le Lavezzi before and really enjoyed it so we were happy that they had a table on the balcony for us for dinner in Bastia, overlooking the old port. The food (Italian) is great and the view can't be beat.</p> <p>We spent the days outside of Bastia but the evenings exploring the city, primarily around the old port area.</p>
Monday, August 31st	Night in Bastia, Hotel Les Voyageurs			<p><i>Day:</i> Boat tour organized by hotel</p> <p>So it wasn't exactly organized by the hotel in the end, but we did do a boat trip from St. Florent with Le Popeye (http://www.lepopeye.com/) to the Agriate Desert beach of Lodo. From Lodo, we hiked along the shore (45 min or so) to Saleccia beach, then took a short jeep ride back to Lodo. Both beaches are incredible—beautiful white sand and turquoise water. And even the drive up and over the mountains from Bastia to St. Florent is well worth it.</p>
Tuesday, September 1st	Night in Bastia, Hotel Les Voyageurs	<p>The last night in Bastia we ate on the south side of the old port (for a different view from the last two nights on the north side). We ate at Chez Huguette, which was a bit pricier than some of the other restaurants around but it was excellent, worth the splurge.</p>		<p><i>Day:</i> 4x4 tour of Cap Corse organized by hotel</p> <p><i>Note:</i> return rental car by 3pm or more likely the night before (3 rue Chanoine Leschi, Bastia)</p> <p>We ended up booking a jeep tour with Alban of Rando 4x4 Corse: http://www.rando4x4corse.com/. We explored Cap Corse, the peninsula north of Bastia, all day long in Alban's jeep, as part of a little caravan of jeeps. Alban's trips give new meaning to "off road". Several of the "roads" we went down Alban claims to have created himself. It was really quite an amazing experience that I would highly recommend.</p>

Wednesday, September 2nd	Ferry Bastia to Nice; night in Saint Paul de Vence, Le Hameau	<p><i>Ferry:</i> Bastia to Nice (8h – 13h30)</p> <p><i>Car:</i> Europcar, 12 Ave de Thiers (by train station) – 2pm</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Le Hameau 528 Route De La Colle Saint Paul, 06570, France +33493328024</p> <p>Le Hameau is on a gorgeous property only about ½ mile from the old town of St. Paul de Vence. I highly recommend it. Be sure to save some time for just exploring and enjoying the grounds!</p>	<p><i>Ferry:</i> €71.96/2 people (including armchairs)</p> <p><i>Car:</i> \$80.46</p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> €166.80</p>	<p><i>Evening:</i> Explore Saint-Paul de Vence</p> <p>Wednesday morning, we took the ferry from Bastia (not far at all from our hotel) to Nice. It's a beautiful trip up the coast of Cap Corse. We were able to get lawn chairs outside for no extra charge. (Do not bother paying extra for an armchair—they are inside in a disgusting windowless room. It's much better outside.)</p> <p>We had lunch near the ferry port in Nice, then took a taxi to the train station where we rented a car (via Autoeurope.com as we had done in Corsica).</p> <p>St. Paul de Vence is a beautiful medieval walled town but it can be quite touristy during the day. We decided to explore in the evening, after the bus tours had left.</p>
Thursday, September 3rd	Night near Gorges du Verdon	<p><i>Hotel:</i> Bastide Du Calalou Moissac-Bellevue, 83630</p> <p>Bastide Du Calalou is a beautiful property in a small village. There's a wonderful pool and a number of gardens to explore, and a great terrace if the weather is warm enough for outdoor eating. We had dinner indoors but breakfast on the terrace. I highly recommend having dinner at the Bastide's (fancy) restaurant. Hotel guests get a special rate on the <i>prix fixe</i> dinner + breakfast that's an excellent deal.</p>	€150.48	<p><i>Day:</i> Explore Gorges du Verdon</p> <p>We left Le Hameau in the morning and drove up to Castellane for lunch, then spent a few hours driving the northern rim and circuit of the Gorges du Verdon (the D952 and the circular D23 then back to the D952 up to Moustiers-Sainte-Marie). The village of Moustiers-Sainte-Marie and the nearby Lac de Sainte-Croix are worth a stop. You can paddleboat in the lake if you like.</p>
Friday, September 4th	Night in Villefranche	<p><i>Return rental car to 12 Ave de Thiers, 2pm; trains from Nice to VF about every 30 min</i></p> <p><i>Hotel:</i> Hotel Le Provençal 4 Avenue Du Marechal Joffre Villefranche Sur Mer, 06230</p> <p>We chose to stay in Villefranche and not Nice because it's smaller and more relaxing but also because in 2007, I went to a fantastic intensive 4-week French language course at the Institut de Français in Villefranche that I would very highly recommend (http://www.institutdefrancais.com/) so I was happy to go back and visit. Villefranche also makes for a very central and convenient location from which to explore the rest of the Côte d'Azur.</p> <p>Hotel Le Provençal (http://hotelleprovençal.fr/home/) is very central (yet half the price of the Welcome Hotel, the higher-end hotel right on the port, a 5-minute walk away.) It has been renovated recently and has a nice sitting room and comfortable rooms. My only complaint is the bathroom was so, so small that I actually hit my head (hard!) on the sink while showering (don't ask....)</p>	€300/3 nights	<p><i>Day:</i> Drive to Nice then train to Villefranche</p> <p>In the morning, we drove back to Nice, explored the old town of Nice and had lunch there before dropping off the car and taking the train (just 5 minutes) to Villefranche.</p> <p>Out first afternoon/evening in Villefranche, we walked around the old town and explored a bit. We had a nice dinner on rue du Poilu, one of the main drags.</p>

Saturday, September 5th	Night in Villefranche	We ate dinner at Le Serre, a great option for a cheaper dinner (the prix fixe is an especially good value) in the heart of the old town. There are plenty of outdoor tables and while you don't get a view of the ocean, you get the feeling of being in the old town. http://www.tripadvisor.com/Restaurant_Review-g187246-d1334409-Reviews-Le_Serre-Villefranche_sur_Mer_French_Riviera_Cote_d_Azur_Provence.html		Day: Sanremo Many years ago, I had also spent a month in Sanremo, one of the first towns over the Italian border. So I was excited to get back and visit. Plus who wouldn't take the opportunity to eat lunch in Italy when it's that close? To get to Sanremo, the only annoyance is that you have to buy a ticket from Villefranche to Ventimiglia, the first town in Italy, then get off the train and buy a new ticket from Ventimiglia to Sanremo. At least on the way back, you have bought round-trip tickets and you have the schedule already (be sure to ask for it in Ventimiglia) and you can time the connection better. Sanremo has a great promenade and old town to explore (at least if you're keen on stairs). It also has a section with huge villas, a bunch of pedestrian shopping streets and a uniquely decorated Russian Orthodox church. There's plenty to see (and eat) and it makes for a great day trip. We decided to stop off in Monaco on the way back on the train. I'm not a huge fan of Monaco though; we didn't stay long.
Sunday, September 6th	Night in Villefranche	The last night in Villefranche, we had dinner at the Oursin Bleu (http://www.restaurant-oursin-bleu.com/restaurant.htm). It's a bit of a splurge but well worth it for fantastic seafood and other fare.		Day: St Jean-Cap Ferrat walk Perhaps my very favorite thing to do on the Côte d'Azur is to hike from Villefranche, along Villefranche's beach, to Beaulieu then along the coastal path of the Cap Ferrat peninsula, with a stop off in the port of Saint-Jean for lunch. The scenery is spectacular and there are places to swim all along the way. Depending on your timing, you can also eat at the first beach on the Villefranche side of the peninsula if you don't want to wait until the port of Saint-Jean. Be sure not to miss the smaller peninsula off Cap Ferrat as well. Bring your swimsuit and plan on spending all day, taking your time.
Monday, September 7th	Mom flies to Boston; Abby flies to Rennes	Abby: NICE COTE D AZUR RENNES ST JACQUES A53193 07 Sep 12:30 -14:10 Terminal 2B		We took an Uber to the Nice airport from our Villefranche hotel the last morning. The airport is small and easy to get around.