Islands of Hesperia

CORSICA AND SARDINIA

with Christopher Allen

18 September – 03 October 2015 (16 days)
Islands of Hesperia
CORSICA AND SARDINIA

From the ancient Greek city of Marseille to the islands of Corsica and Sardinia, discover an enchanting but unfamiliar corner of the Mediterranean.

Start in Marseille, founded over 2500 years ago by Phocaean settlers and today the fascinating and cosmopolitan Mediterranean capital of France. We will explore the tiny ancient streets of the Panier district – partly dynamited by the Nazis during the war – and visit France’s newest national Museum, spectacularly sited on the edge of the harbour. We sail to Corsica, the beautiful former Genoese island with its incredibly wild mountains and breathtaking coastline, finishing at Bonifacio, legendary home of the monstrous Laestrygonians in the Odyssey. A short crossing takes us to Sardinia another beautiful island with an intriguing ancient bronze age civilization, the Nuraghic peoples who have left us great stone constructions and exquisite little bronze statues. Today it offers wonderful landscapes and coastlines, elegant cities, churches and museums, squares to relax with a coffee or aperitif, and plenty of very fine and always generous local cuisine.

At a glance…

- Enjoy Spectacular mountain landscapes and coastlines – walks and boat excursions
- Discover ancient archaeological sites in both Corsica and Sardinia
- Stay in delightful 4-5 star boutique hotels throughout
- Experience atmospheric towns and villages
- Savour inventive and delicious Mediterranean gastronomy

TOUR LEADER

Dr Christopher Allen is an art critic and historian who graduated from the University of Sydney, has worked at the Collège de France in Paris and the National Art School, and is currently Senior Master in Academic Extension at Sydney Grammar School.

He is the author of Art in Australia from colonization to postmodernism (London, Thames and Hudson, 1997), French painting in the golden age (London, Thames and Hudson, 2003), and several other books. His most recent book, Jeffrey Smart: unpublished paintings 1940–2007 (Melbourne, Australian Galleries) was published in April 2008. He was art critic of the Financial Review from 2005-2008 and since 2008 has been national art critic for The Australian.
Thu 17 September 2015  
Depart Australia  
Suggested departure from Australia on QANTAS / Emirates flights to Nice via Dubai.

Fri 18 Sep  
Arrive Marseille  
Early afternoon arrival at Nice airport and transfer to Marseille (205 km, approx. 2.5 hrs). Tour members not travelling on this flight may also join this transfer.

Arrive in Marseille in the late afternoon. Later, join Christopher and fellow travellers for welcome drinks.

Sat 19 Sep  
Marseille  
Begin your exploration of Marseille with a walking tour of the historic centre. Walk through the heart of the old Panier quarter with its narrow streets, artisans’ shops and terraced houses, the centrepiece being the Vieille Charité, a former almshouse, now functioning as a museum and cultural centre. A morning stop at a local café before heading to the Museum of European and Mediterranean Civilisation. Opened in 2013, the museum is split across two dramatically contrasting sites, linked by a foot-bridge. On one side sits Fort St-Jean, founded in the 13th century by the Knights Hospitalier of St John of Jerusalem and later rebuilt by Louis XIV; and on the other side the contemporary new museum ‘a shoebox with breathtaking lace’ skin’ designed by Algerian-born architect Rudy Ricciotti.

This evening enjoy a welcome dinner in a local restaurant. 🍽️ 🍽️

Sun 20 Sep  
Marseille – Bastia  
Continue your exploration of Marseille with a morning walk to the Musée Cantini, and then stroll along Marseille’s historic high street La Canebière. This afternoon visit the Musée des Beaux-Arts which occupies a wing of the Palais Longchamp. Created to celebrate the construction of the Canal de Marseille which was built to bring water from the Durance River to Marseille, the Palais Longchamp displays a collection of paintings, sculptures and drawings from the 16th to 19th centuries. This evening transfer to the port in time for your overnight Mediterranean ferry crossing to Corsica. 🍽️ 🍽️

Mon 21 Sep  
Bastia  
Wake up to the sounds of the sea throughout the boat. Early breakfast on board before heading on deck to view the beautiful port town of Bastia on your arrival in Corsica. Begin your exploration with a walk around the Old Port, with its faded charm of narrow streets and alleys, where washing still hangs from ancient shuttered windows in the tall, often almost crumbling, buildings, dating largely from the 18th century. Lunch at a local restaurant. This afternoon head to the north of Bastia to Cap Corse, a long finger of land with small fishing villages set against a backdrop of mountains that run down the centre of the peninsula, ending your day at the charming fishing village of Erbalunga and your hotel for this evening. 🍽️ 🍽️ 🍽️

Tue 22 Sep  
Bastia to Calvi  
After a morning talk time at leisure to explore the small town of Erbalunga. Early afternoon travel to Calvi. Sitting in a strategic position on the northwest coast Calvi had a turbulent past having been invaded on numerous occasions. According to local legend, Christopher Columbus may have been born in Calvi, which at the time was part of the Genoese empire, though he may have chosen to conceal the fact because of the city had a bad reputation, as a centre of subversion. 🍽️ 🍽️

Wed 23 Sep  
Calvi  
Full day excursion to Calanques and the coastal towns of Piana. Travelling down Corsica’s west coast is an unspoilt landscape of mountainous red and grey granite outcrops separated by huge swathes of pines and eucalyptus trees. The roads are narrow and wind around rocky bends. Lunch at leisure in Piana. You may wish to take a walk along the Sentier des Muletiers, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, with some well marked and not overly-strenuous, well marked walking trails. Late afternoon return to the hotel. 🍽️

Thu 24 Sep  
Ajaccio  
Travel from Calvi to Ajaccio, famous as the birthplace of Napoléon Bonaparte. The emperor was born here in 1769, and the city is dotted with sites and monuments, from his childhood home to seafront statues, museums and street names.
Abandoned during the 15th century because the site proved malarial, the rocky promontory of Capo di Bollo was chosen as the site for a new town by the Republic of Genoa. About a hundred Genoese and Ligurian families, the Bonapartes among them, were sent to Corsica to colonise it, the aim to set up a new port to provide protection on the sea route to the mainland.

Fri 25 Sep  Ajaccio
After a morning talk enjoy a walking tour of the historic centre. Visit the Casa Napoleon, the birthplace of Napoleon, the Cathedral and Place Foch, in the centre of the old town and once the site of its towns medieval gates. Visit Musée Fesch was constructed for Cardinal Fesch, a maternal uncle of Napoleon Bonaparte and built with the intention of accommodating an Arts and Sciences Institute. Born in Ajaccio in 1763, the Cardinal died in Rome, leaving a legacy of more than a thousand paintings to his native town. The Museum’s most prestigious collections are: Italian Primitives, Roman Baroque Painting and Neapolitan Baroque Painting.

This afternoon drive to the prehistoric site of Filitosa. Only discovered in 1946 Filitosa has a magnificent array of prehistoric menhirs and statues with the hard granite carved into human representations.

Return to Ajaccio for dinner in a local restaurant.

Sat 26 Sep  Bonifacio
Depart Ajaccio and travel south to Bonifacio, a town that has managed to preserve its ancient character thanks to its geological situation. Bonifacio is a sheltered port protected by a fortified town perched on high chalk cliffs and surrounded by stupendously impregnable walls. Some believe that the giant cannibalistic Laestrygonians described in Homer’s Odyssey may refer to Bonifacio’s early inhabitants (7th century BC). Bonifacio fits Homer’s description of an excellent harbour closed in on all sides by an unbroken ring of precipitous cliffs, with a narrow channel in between.

This afternoon take a coastal excursion and view Bonifacio from the sea. Marvel at the buildings perched high atop the chalk-white limestone and look for the staircase of the King of Aragon carved out of the sheer cliff. Returning to the marina hop on the small-wheeled tram that will take you up into the old walled city - or climb up the steep path on foot. Here you can visit the centuries old Convent, an ancient cemetery for mariners and the church of St. Dominique. Stroll through narrow cobbled streets and climb the same steps used by Napoleon & Charles V.

Sun 27 Sep  Bonifacio – Santa Teresa – Alghero
Leaving Corsica travel by ferry across the strait of the Tyrrenian Sea to the small Italian port town of Santa Teresa di Gallura. After a stop for lunch head to Alghero, pausing along the way at the Basilica della Santissima Trinità di Saccargia, the most important Romanesque Church on the island. Construction was completed in 1116, in local black basalt stone and white limestone in a style recalling the Tuscan Romanesque. Abandoned in the 16th century, the Church was restored and reopened in the early 20th century. Late afternoon arrival in Alghero.

Mon 28 Sep  Alghero
After a morning talk leave for Porto Torres, among the most important little towns in the north of Sardinia and home to one of the island’s largest archaeological complexes. The Roman colony of Turris Lybissonis was founded in the 2nd century BC, on an area long inhabited by earlier peoples, and numerous Nuraghic monuments are found in the vicinity. Sites of archaeological interest include the thermal baths, the “Palazzo of Re Barbaro” and the “Turritan Antiquarian” Museum. Also visit the Basilica of San Gavino, the island’s largest Romanesque church.

Travel on to Sassari, Sardinia’s second largest city. Since its origins at the turn of the 12th century when Porto Torres, subject to constant attacks by Saracen pirates, became inhabitable - Sassari has been ruled by the Giudicato of Torres, the Pisans, the Sassaresi themselves in alliance with Genoa, the Aragonese and the Spanish, all of whom have contributed to the city’s historical and artistic
heritage. Sassari is rich in art, culture and history, and well known for its beautiful palazzi, the Fountain of the Rosello, and its elegant neoclassical architecture. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant and an afternoon walking tour. Late afternoon return to Alghero.

**Tue 29 Sep**

Oristano

Morning transfer from Alghero to Oristano driving down the coast road stopping in the village of Bosa. Surrounded by high plateaux on one side and a deep river below, the vineyards of the famous amber-coloured Malvasia wine are the setting for the old town where it is still possible to see old women intent on weaving Bosa filet using looms to embroider traditional designs. Another traditional activity is the manufacture of gold filigree. After lunch in Bosa head to the Nuragic site of the Valle dei Nuraghi and on to Oristano.

**Wed 30 Sep**

Oristano

Following a morning talk, explore the nearby archaeological site of Tharros. Once a coastal city founded by the Phoenicians in the eighth century BC, on the site of a former Nuragic village (there are remains of a tophet, an open-air sacred place typical of Phoenician settlements), it was occupied by the Romans and successive populations until, like Porto Torres, pirate raids made it uninhabitable, and the population moved inland to found the city of Oristano. Early afternoon return to Oristano. Afternoon and evening at leisure.

**Thu 01 Oct**

Cagliari

Depart Oristano for Cagliari. On the way stop at the UNESCO World Heritage site of Su Nuraxi di Barumini. The complex at Barumini, which was extended and reinforced in the first half of the 1st millennium under Carthaginian pressure, is the finest and most complete example of this remarkable form of prehistoric architecture.

Mid afternoon arrival in Cagliari. The largest city in Sardinia, which DH Lawrence arriving here in the 1920s, compared to Jerusalem: ‘…strange and rather wonderful, not a bit like Italy.’

**Fri 02 Oct**

Cagliari

This morning enjoy a walking tour of Cagliari. Begin in Piazza del Carmine (the Forum during Roman times) to admire the ruins of Tigello’s villa, see the Roman amphitheatre and the medieval district of Castello, the Cathedral restored in the 1930s.

Visit the Sardinian Archaeological Museum, the most important museum of the Nuragic civilization. Pass by some of the old artisan workshops along the narrow lanes, and end with a beautiful view over Cagliari from the Bastion of Saint Remy. Afternoon at leisure before enjoying a farewell dinner in a local restaurant.

**Sat 03 Oct**

Depart Cagliari

Tour arrangements conclude with a transfer to Cagliari airport for suggested afternoon flight to Rome to connect on Emirates/Qantas flight via Dubai.

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**Nuraghi**

Following earlier Neolithic and Chalcolithic cultures on the island, Sardinia was occupied in the second millennium BC by the so-called Nuraghic civilization: this Bronze-age population may be identical with the mysterious ‘sea-peoples’ who preyed on Mycenaean, Hittite and Egyptian coastal cities before suddenly disappearing from the historical record or rather, according to this theory, settling in Sardinia. Their most visible remains are the stone tower-forts (‘Nuraghi’) that are scattered all over the island: there are some 7000 in all, of which 200 have been excavated. They also left a great many evocative bronze statuettes of chiefs, warriors, priests, animals and boats. The Nuragic civilization came under pressure from the Phoenicians, who established coastal strongholds in the southwest of the island from the 8th century (including Tharros and Karalis, now Cagliari); Phoenician Carthage eventually dominated the island from about the 6th–5th century BC.
Tour prices

Per person, twin share AUD 8,850
Single supplement* AUD 1,500
Deposit per person AUD 500
Final payment due 17 July 2015

*Single travellers may request to share. Please advise at time of booking.

Tour code AG1514

Fitness level Above Average
Please see booking conditions for fitness level definitions.

Suggested airline Qantas/Emirates
Please contact Renaissance Tours for current airfares and flight reservations.

Tour price includes
• Accommodation in centrally located superior 4-star hotels with daily breakfast (B)
• Meals as per itinerary (L=Lunch, D=Dinner) including wines with dinners
• Transfers on arrival from Nice to Marseille airport and on departure in Cagliari if travelling on suggested flights (Emirates/QANTAS)
• Comprehensive sightseeing and visits with Christopher Allen and local guides including entrance fees as per itinerary
• Transportation throughout in comfortable, air-conditioned coaches
• Ferry transportation from Marseille – Bastia in twin cabins including dinner and breakfast.
• Gratuities for local guides and drivers
• Hotel porterage (one piece per person).

Tour price does not include
• International airfares
• Items of a personal nature, including telephone, laundry, mini-bar etc.
• Airport porterage
• Travel insurance

Your hotels *** and ****
Marseille: Radisson Blu Marseille Vieux Port
Erbalunga: Castel Brando
Calvi: Hotel La Signoria
Ajaccio: Hotel Thalassa
Bonifacio: Hotel Solemare
Alghero: Grand Hotel Carlo V
Oristano: Hotel Mistral II
Cagliari: Hotel T

NB. Hotels of a similar standard may be substituted
Terms & Conditions

HOW TO BOOK
Complete, sign and return the Booking Form available from Renaissance Tours with your deposit and page one of your passport.

DEPOSIT / FINAL PAYMENTS
Your deposit is due at the time of booking and is used to pay hotel, airline, performance tickets and/or other deposits. It is non-refundable in the event of your cancellation.

Final payment is due 60 days before departure. Failure to make the final payment by the due date may result in cancellation of your booking and loss of deposit.

Payment by cash, cheque, direct deposit, American Express, MasterCard and Visa is accepted. 1.5% service charge applies to payment made by MasterCard and Visa. 3% service charge applies to payment made by American Express.

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a) Cancellation by You – Cancellation charges will be applied as shown below, calculated from the day written notification is received by Renaissance Tours. In addition to cancellation fees for tours operated by Renaissance Tours as shown below, airlines, hotels and other third parties may impose up to 100% cancellation charges.

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The above cancellation charges include applicable GST.

In addition to the above, cancellation charges may apply for additional arrangements booked by Renaissance Tours, such as air tickets, hotels and travel insurance premium. If the reason for cancellation is covered by the insurance policy, you may be able to reclaim these charges.

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PASSPORTS, VISAS AND VACCINATIONS
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TOUR PRICES
Prices quoted in our tour information are based on exchange rates, cost of services and applicable taxes at the time of publication. Prices may be subject to change in the event of significant currency fluctuations or the introduction of new taxes, up until final payment is received.

In the event of a price increase, whether because of a currency fluctuation, increase in taxes or a correction in advertised prices, we will advise you and you have the option of accepting the amended prices, inclusions and booking conditions or withdrawing from the tour and receiving a full refund of all monies paid.

Once final payment is received, all prices will be guaranteed and no surcharges will apply.

TRAVEL INSURANCE
It is a condition of travel that you are covered by comprehensive travel insurance for international tours. Your travel insurance can be arranged by Renaissance Tours.

FITNESS AND PARTICIPATION
Most of our tours require a MODERATE level of fitness. However, in certain destinations (e.g. Silk Road, Central Asia, Outback Australia, tropical destinations) or in certain seasons (e.g. mid-winter, mid-summer) or because of the nature of travel (e.g. remote rail), certain tours will require an ABOVE AVERAGE or CHALLENGING level of fitness.

If you (or we) have any doubts about your level of fitness, you may be required to have a doctor’s appraisal. This would require your doctor to read the itinerary of your chosen tour, including the fitness level, and provide you (and us) with a written confirmation of your ability to participate.

MODERATE
For the overall benefit of the group, all tour members must possess a moderate level of mobility, including the ability to:

• negotiate airports and railway stations without wheelchair assistance
• use combined shower/bath facilities (it is impossible to guarantee walk-in shower facilities)
• undertake walking tour of 1–2 hours duration, including using stairs, walking over cobblestones and other uneven surfaces
• stand for long periods in museums and other sites
• embark/disembark coaches, trains and other methods of transportation without assistance
• handle your own luggage

ABOVE AVERAGE
In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

• undertake walking tours of 2–3 hours
• climb staircases of 100 or more steps

CHALLENGING
In addition to the above, tour members must also be able to:

• handle extremes of temperature (e.g. below 0 or above 35 degrees)
• handle extremes of altitudes (e.g. 4000 metres and above).

You can find the full terms & conditions at www.renaissancetours.com.au/booking-conditions or we would be happy to post you a copy on request.