

Raid Corsica

946km cycling challenge around the stunning island of Corsica
with 14,900m of ascent, all in 6 days of cycling!

Summary

WHERE: Corsica
DISTANCE: 946km
TIME : 6 days
PRICE : see website
DATES: September



Highlights

Tour of the 'Isle of Beauty'

Official Paris Audax Club route, certificate & medal

Stunning & varied scenery, coastal views and historic towns

Friendly 2 & 3* hotels with Corsican cuisine



The Raid Corsica

The Raid Corsica is a fabulous cycling challenge first set up by the Parisian Audax club, who also happened to think up the madness that is the Paris - Brest - Paris! Well, they know what it takes to make a fantastic cycling route and the Raid Corsica or 'Tour de Corse' is a wonderful circuit of the island also known as the "Isle of Beauty". Ok, so another name for the island happens to translate as "Mountain in the Sea", but then what kind of Raid would be flat?!

You will be following the official Raid Corsica route, so you need to have your Carnet stamped in a variety of different places along the way and on successful completion of the Raid, there is a certificate and medal to reward you for your endeavours.

Corsica is the most mountainous and geographically diverse of the Mediterranean islands. Its terrain is varied, ranging from flatland marshes, the 'Désert des Agriates' and imposing granite peaks to its coastline lapped by inviting azure seas.

The Raid is a cycling challenge but it is also your holiday. Marmot Tours have been supporting clients on our Raid challenges for over 15 years, and ensuring that you have a great time is what we are passionate about. You will love the ride, the country and the route, enjoying some great banter along the way. We leave no stone unturned in preparing for your holiday and making it the best it can be - which is why you just have to eat sleep and turn the pedals...



Your Raid Route

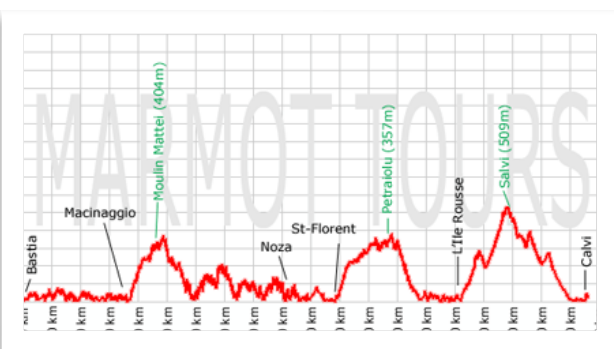
Day 0 - Travel Out

We offer included transfers from Bastia BIA airport (35min) and Bastia ferry terminal (10min) at set times during the day. Our start hotel, just north of Bastia, overlooks the sea and has access to a small beach. With its rooftop swimming pool, it is the perfect place to relax and prepare for the upcoming cycling challenge. There will be time to assemble your bikes and have a welcome briefing and great dinner.

Day 1 - Bastia to Calvi 191KM WITH 2370M ASCENT

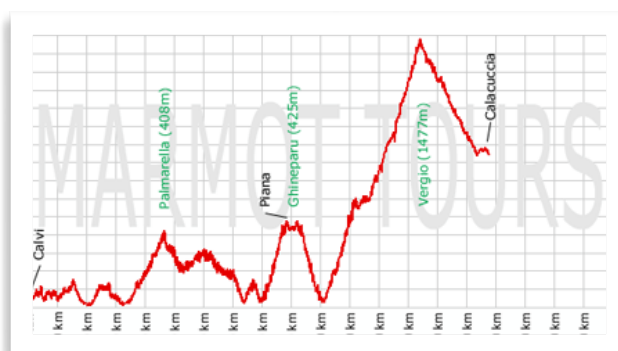
An early start sees you heading around Cap Corse on a unique and stunning coast road with spectacular views. You arrive at the picturesque harbour town of St Florent for a well earned lunch at around the 100km mark, before climbing up to the rocky plateau of the 'Desert des Agriates'.

A fabulous descent sees you back on the coast road and heading south to l'Ile Rousse. From here, you head inland again on a beautiful backroad into the hills - the reward for your efforts is a great view of the mountains and coast, and your destination Calvi way below. Calvi is one of the top tourist destinations on the island and if you have the energy for a dip in the sea or a stroll around the marina you will see why!



Day 2 - Calvi to Calacuccia 160KM WITH 2860M ASCENT

Mt Cinto is a rugged and dramatic snowcapped peak, rising up to 2700m just over 20km from Calvi. It may inspire you (or fill you with fear) to hear that today's destination is 'just over the other side' of this mountain. We set off on another, even more stunning (and even more undulating) coastal road which takes us over a few named cols. The most noteworthy place on today's ride is 'Les Calanches' - a landscape of multicoloured spikes and spires towering above the deep blue waters. Amazing as they are, you may find the 11km detour up to the hilltop town of Pina for a 'tampon' takes 'Raiding' to another level! Next up is the highest road pass in Corsica - the Col de Vergio (1477).

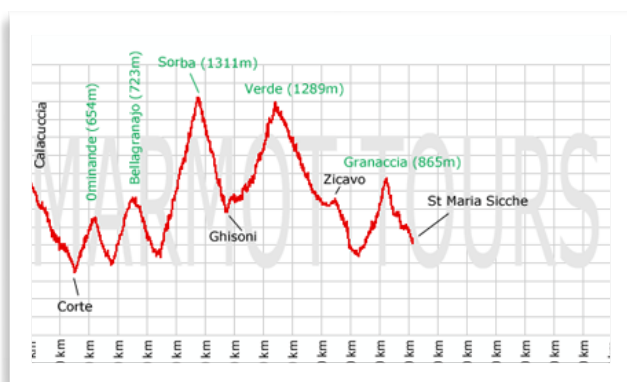


It is a baby compared to the mighty cols of the Alps or Pyrenees but you do start from sea level, making it a fair challenge. All that remains is to roll down the hill to our hotel in the mountain hamlet of Calacuccia.



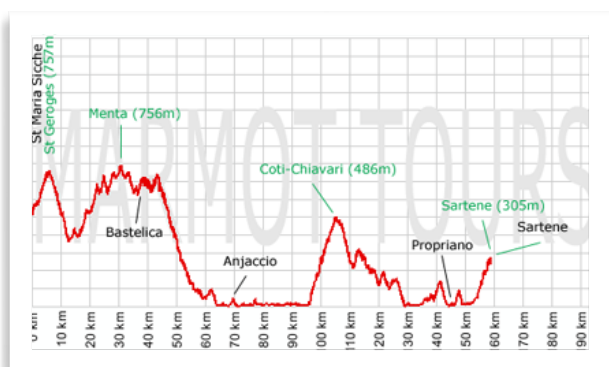
Day 3 - Calacuccia to Santa-Maria-Siché 133KM WITH 2700M ASCENT

Today we explore the mountainous interior of the island. It is a great route taking us through deep gorges, thick forests and into the southern uplands. The historical capital of Corte is well placed for a morning coffee and a wander before taking to the road again (you are on holiday after all!) In total there are 5 cols today, with the highest being the Col de Sorba (1311m). Our destination is the 'one dog village' of Santa-Maria-Siché.



Day 4 - Santa-Maria-Siché to Sartène 156KM WITH 2540M ASCENT

We start the day with a quick nip up to the mountainous village of Bastelica for a 'tampon' and a coffee. From here we descend to Ajaccio for a reality check with a brief spell on a main road. We are, however, soon back on the coast road linking one deserted sandy beach after another



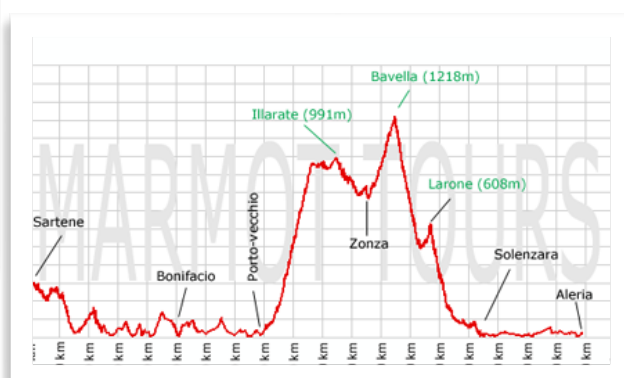
(naturally with a few undulations in between). Our destination is the hilltop town of Sartène, which has had an eventful history of pirates, banditry and vendettas! It is now fortunately a very pleasant town and has even been called 'the most Corsican of Corsican towns'.

Day 5 - Sartène to Aléria 187KM WITH 2430M ASCENT

Good tarmac, beautiful views, beaches, historic towns... today is a holiday day (well the morning is, anyway!) Eventually we get to the southern tip of the island and the town of Bonifacio, which is surrounded by towering limestone cliffs - it is a 'tampon town' and well worth taking the time to visit.

Make sure you try the local nut and raisin bread, which is a lot better than its name "the bread of the dead" suggests!

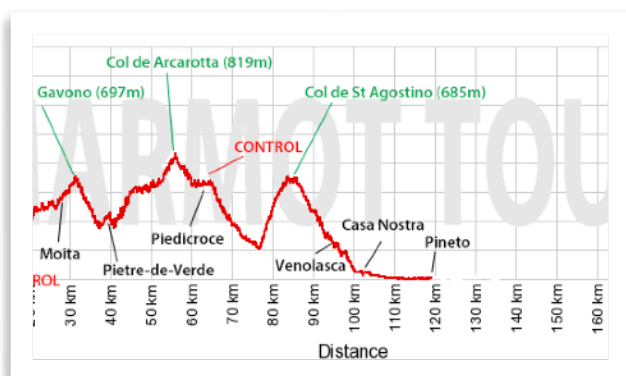
Here we leave the coast and turn inland once again, heading for the Col de Bavella (1218m). This is followed by a great descent to the understated seaside town and port of Solenzara and a further (flat!) 35km to our resting place for the night - Aléria.



Day 6 - Aléria to Bastia 119KM WITH 2000M ASCENT

We warm up with a slightly flatter start today, before exploring the hills that overlook Corsica's north-east coast. The climb is well worth the effort - it is a beautiful route through picturesque villages and terraced hillsides, with a few cheeky climbs, of course!

Eventually, you drop back to the coast and join a small road that runs along a coastal spur between a lagoon and the sea. We finish our cycling challenge just south of Bastia in a resort hotel with swimming pool and access to a long beach. Now it's time to celebrate!



Day 7 - Travel Back

We offer included transfers to drop you at either Bastia airport (15min) or the ferry port (25min) in the morning.

Start & End Hotels

Calavita, 39 Route du Cap, 20200 Pietranera, Bastia, Corsica. Tel: +33 4 95 31 56 63

Isola, 5644 Route des Marines de Borgo, lido de la Marana, 20290 Borgo, Bastia, Corsica. Tel: +33 4 95 33 19 60

Travel

Finding flights

We recommend using a comparison tool such as www.skyscanner.net when searching for direct or indirect flights from various airports/regions/countries. It can be helpful if you search for one-way flights, giving results of all direct routes available, eg. 'UK to BIA'. Search results may change as airlines release their schedules for the following year at varying times.

If you are flying long haul, we recommend arriving a day early in order to get over any jet lag before you start cycling and join us either at our start hotel or back at the airport for a transfer. We can generally only offer an airport transfer on the start/finish days of the itinerary but can certainly arrange a taxi transfer for you (payable direct to your driver) on other days.

If you are travelling in a group of 6 or more and are unable to join the group airport transfers, we may be able to organise a private transfer for you. Please contact us to discuss.

Under your own steam...

If you are going to meet us at the start hotel or are leaving independently at the end of your trip to go on elsewhere, please let us know so we can plan accordingly; we may also be able to help you with your travel plans, so do get in touch if you need assistance.

Foreign Travel Advice

For the latest travel advice from the Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office including security and local laws, plus passport and visa information, check www.gov.uk/foreign-travel-advice.

Airport Transfers

Marmot Tours offer airport transfers at designated times from the most convenient airport for the start of your trip. Transfers are timed to fit in with as many flights from as many regional airports as possible.

Transfers at set times from and back to **Bastia airport (BIA)** on the travel days are included in the holiday price. The transfer time to the start hotel is around 45 min, and about 20min back at the end of the trip.

If you arrive earlier than the transfer time then you will need to wait at the airport for your pick up. If flights are delayed then transfers may also be delayed. If flights are significantly delayed or cancelled then you may need to take a taxi to the start hotel and make a claim on your insurance or to your airline.

You will find our most up to date transfer times on the **Holiday Details** page on the Link (once you've made your booking). If you need to know the timings before booking, please get in touch via email: cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk.

Ferry Port Transfers

We are able to do a pick up from Bastia Ferry Terminal - although if an arrival time clashes with the airport pick ups, you may need to wait or take a taxi (only 10min to the hotel). Corsica Ferries operate day ferries departing from Nice or overnight ferries from Toulon.

Navigation

We provide you with colour maps and altitude profiles, as well as detailed directions of where to go. Our guides will even aim to be at those 'easy to miss' junctions and as you will see the van and guides regularly, navigation does not tend to be a problem.

For those of you with GPS units, we have GPS files available and will post them on The Link a few weeks before departure, in .gpx, and .tcx formats.

The files can be downloaded onto most units, including Garmin and Wahoo and in their most basic form provide a purple line to follow. With the more recent units you will also receive a set of visual instructions as you approach a turning. Our GPS tracks take you from hotel to hotel.

How does it compare?

Corsica is a 'holiday island', but this road cycling challenge is definitely comparable to the mainland raids (Pyrenean, Alpine, Massif Central and the Dolomites).

There is less 'big col' climbing but more distance than on the other Raids offered by Marmot, with an average daily route of 158km. Having said 'less climbing', there are still some fabulous and significant cols, such as the Vergio at 1477m and the Sorba, Verde and Bavella, all at over 1200m.

Though the climbs are not as high as the mainland mountain ranges, they often start from sea level! Overall, the average daily ascent comes in at 2483m, so all in all, this is certainly a wonderful challenge!

Am I fit Enough?

It is possible (or even probable) that the seed of doing a Raid was planted in your mind when you had a drink in hand, chatting with mates. In the cold light of day it is only right to consider whether or not you are fit enough to take it on! All our Raid routes are challenging and you need to be a regular road cyclist in order to enjoy and get the most out of this trip, so please make sure this trip is right for you before you book.

Many of our riders are club cyclists, have done cyclosportives or some longer distance rides.

However by no means all of them have, and we have had many clients who have been fairly new to road cycling (but who have a good level of fitness perhaps from a different sport) who have effectively trained for the trip and successfully completed this Raid. As a first Raid however, most people tend to start with the Raid Pyrenean as it is just 4.5 days in the saddle.

Pacing

The key to success on the Raid Corsica is pacing yourself. We are very keen to emphasise that you don't need to be cycling super fast in order to manage the daily route. The joy of a Marmot Raid is that from the group of around 20 riders you are likely to find someone to cycle at a similar speed to you, so you don't need to try and keep up with your partner, friend or room mate. The quickest way to injure yourself or burn out is to cycle faster than you feel comfortable going. Two guides in support vehicles will support your every need, be it mechanical, nutritional or motivational, so you are going to be supported on the road for as long as it takes to ride each day's route.

Training

This is a holiday that requires training. We want you to achieve your goals and to enjoy the whole experience. The fitter you are, the more you can relax and take note of the stunning route and throw yourself into the group banter. It can be difficult finding extended climbs for training in the UK, but generally, if you can build up your stamina and comfort in doing long daily distances you will really benefit when it comes to the Raid itself. Feel free to use the Link Forum if you would like to share your training plans with your group or meet other riders local to you pre-trip.

If, after reading this, you really can't banish the doubt then it may be worth you looking at one of our Classic Cols style holidays as a starter. You get to climb many of the same climbs but there is ultimate flexibility on the holiday as you have options and can choose each day between a 'Classic' route, with perhaps one col a day, or the 'Challenge' route with optional extras and gruelling stage endings. We offer Classic Cols itineraries in the Pyrenees, Provence, Cevennes & Ardeche, Alps, Slovenia, Dolomites, Picos, Catalonia, Andalusia, Corsica and Sardinia.

Group Dynamics

Your group will be any number up to around 20 riders. This number works really well - it's big enough for you to find others to cycle with at your pace, but not so huge as to feel impersonal! We get lots of clients booking alone and lots of small groups of friends. If you think you can get a group of 18 - 20 people together then we can offer you a custom departure date.

We love that we get a really big variety in terms of cycling experience... from club cyclists, people training for other events, those raising money for charity, ex-pro cyclists and people who are relatively new to cycling who like to try something new on holiday.

Accommodation

We stay in a selection of mostly 3* hotels with en-suite facilities. The hotels have been selected for their customer service towards cyclists and their location. You will be sharing a twin room with another client (of the same gender) unless you book a single room for a supplement (contact cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk for availability). Each hotel has a garage/locked room to ensure that your trusty steed has a comfortable night too.

Food

Breakfast

No surprise that this is the crucial meal of the day. We're in France of course, so expect continental style breakfasts. We supplement hotel breakfasts with cereals and fruit. Some hotels offer cheese, eggs & meats for your protein kick start.

Lunches

You know what you like to eat when you are riding and it is not likely to be the same as what the others in your group will want to eat. We don't include lunches so there are no enforced group stops. We strongly advise that you stop for proper food at lunchtime. Each day we recommend a suitable place serving cyclist friendly food which is great for you, and the locals appreciate your custom. We will be sure to have a van there for your midday faff!

Snacks

Your support van aka snack-shack will be well stocked with a variety of tasty delectables:

Salty crisps, bars, cakes, fresh fruit (bananas obviously!), nuts & sweets are the staples. We suggest you bring your own favourite energy powders/gels/bars with you as these will not be easily available en route.

Dinner

We eat as a group in the evening - either in the hotel or at a nearby restaurant. Expect three courses (and generous portions) which are tailored to the needs of cyclists. Dinner will be served at around 19:30. Wine at dinner is included, however, coffees/soft drinks and beers are not.

Special diets

Please note your special dietary requirements on the booking form or contact us. Our hotels can cater for most dietary needs and allergies if we know well in advance. Please note that we request that you stick to your dietary preference for the entire trip, as it is very complicated for the hotels (and guides) if an individual is vegetarian for some meals and not for others.



What's Included

- 6 days supported riding
- Airport transfers on arrival and departure days at specified times
- Route notes, directions, maps and GPS files
- Raid Corsica registration, certificate & medal for successful Raiders
- 7 nights half board accommodation including wine at dinner
- 2 customised and well stocked vehicles with experienced guides, offering moral support, and nutritional, mechanical and first aid assistance, plus snacks & water

Strava

Many cyclists nowadays are using apps like Strava and Garmin Connect to track their progress, training and to compare themselves to their peers.

These apps make for great training tools and interesting post-ride analysis but there are obvious risks associated with competitive cycling styles, pushing yourself beyond your usual tolerance and focusing on live feed information whilst on the bike.

We therefore ask our clients to avoid such 'Live Segment' features when cycling on a Marmot Tours holiday, especially descending, and to **focus on the road at all times**.

Gearing/Bikes

Mainly, climbs are not particularly steep (compared to a lot of hills in the UK) but they do go on for a very long time. It is best to make sure that your bike will be suitable for your level of strength/fitness.

For most people a compact (smallest ring on front having 34 teeth), fitted with a 30 or 32 cassette on the rear, is a good choice. It is possible to fit your bike with larger cassettes, using a rear hanger extender, like the WolfTooth RoadLink.

If this all sounds too complicated then we do have some excellent titanium-framed bikes for hire, which are fitted with SRAM 50-34 at the front with 11 speed 11-36 toothed cassettes.

Guiding

"Our best ever Raid and the support from your team was 1st Class" J Wright

Supporting you on your holiday will be two of our experienced, approachable, knowledgeable and fun guides. Despite being passionate about cycling, both guides will be in support vans as this holiday is all about you and your needs. Between them they will have knowledge of the area and the language and be skilled at bike mechanics.

Having two vehicles per group (regardless of the number of bookings up to a group size of around 20) is what allows us to offer you freedom to cycle at your own pace and with a level of independence on this holiday. It also means that wherever you are in the group (front, back or in-between), you will have access to your personal kit, snacks, water and any mechanical or first aid support. In the event of you needing help for a mechanical (for example) one of the vans will be able to quickly get to you with full tool kits, spare back wheels and even a spare bike. We hope you won't need us for anything serious but being prepared for all eventualities is what we do exceptionally well.

You can expect to see a support van with water, snacks and your personal day bag 3 - 6 times a day, so you don't need to carry much on your bike, unless the weather is exceptional!

A note to speedy cyclists who don't like stopping: Let us know so we can plan with you how to balance your needs against those of others in the group, in order for you to have utmost flexibility regarding pacing etc. If you think you are going to be very fast, please contact us to talk about this and what we can offer you as someone way ahead of others in the group.





Bike Hire

Marmot Tours has an excellently maintained fleet of custom built, titanium framed bikes available to rent for your holiday. Advantages of rental include:

- avoiding hefty fees levied by airlines for transport
- worry free travel (knowing your trusty steed is safely stored away at home!)
- the chance to try a titanium bike built specifically with climbing cols in mind (gearing!)
- relinquishing responsibility for cleaning and maintenance to our experienced team

Please see our [Bike Hire webpage](#) for details like prices as well as full specs and dimensions.

Please note that despite the size of our fleet steadily growing, we cannot guarantee that we will have a bike in your size available. If you would like to hire a bike, please check availability before booking your holiday.

How to Book

1. Email cycle@marmot-tours.co.uk to check availability for your preferred departure date. Remember to also check availability for single room and bike hire if they are your preference.
2. Bag your spot with a provisional booking for a week or so while you get planning.
3. Log on to or register with our online booking system, The Link (link.marmot-tours.co.uk), to make your holiday booking.
4. Pay the £400 deposit by BACS or by card online. Receive a confirmation email.
5. Confirmed single room supplements and bike hire are being added manually to your balance invoices, so may take a day or two to appear.
6. We'll post regular holiday information and updates on the Link (you'll receive an email notification).
7. You can meet your fellow holiday makers via The Link Forum and share training / travel plans etc.

Insurance

Holiday insurance is **essential** for all Marmot Tours holidays and anyone without insurance is not able to take part in the trip. Please arrange your insurance cover at the time of booking, as this will ensure that you are covered if you incur an injury during training and are unable to go on your holiday. We have a very high cancellation rate so are unable to deviate from our [cancellation policy](#).

Your insurance needs to cover you for non-competitive road cycling (cycle touring) at altitude with the following fairly standard inclusions:

- Medical Expenses
- Repatriation

Some clients also like to ensure they have the following optional items:

- Cancellation cover
- Loss or damage to their bike

NB if you are hiring a bike from us there is an insurance element in the fee so you will not need additional cover.

Once you have arranged your insurance, please add the relevant details to the **Before you go...** section of your holiday on [The Link](#). Unlike your passport and emergency contact details, you will need to add insurance details for every trip you are taking.

This ensures we have the most up to date information and are able to assist you in case you have an accident on your holiday.

Financial Protection

Marmot Tours are members of ABTA, the Association of British Travel Agents.

ABTA and ABTA members help holidaymakers to get the most from their travel and assist them when things do not go according to plan.

As part of our membership contract we are obliged to maintain a high standard of service to you by ABTA's Code of Conduct.

- In line with our ABTA membership (no Y6184), we hold an insurance policy that gives you full financial protection for all funds you pay us for your holiday
- We have full Tour Operators Professional and Public Liability Insurance with specialist brokers Campbell Irvine
- We carry out risk assessments on all of our holidays to ensure we have thought through every detail
- We employ staff with the correct experience and skills to ensure you have a safe and fun trip, and have a thorough training programme each season.

For further information about ABTA, the Code of Conduct and the arbitration scheme available to you if you have a complaint, please contact ABTA, 30 Park St, London, SE1 9EQ (Tel 0203 117 0500).

