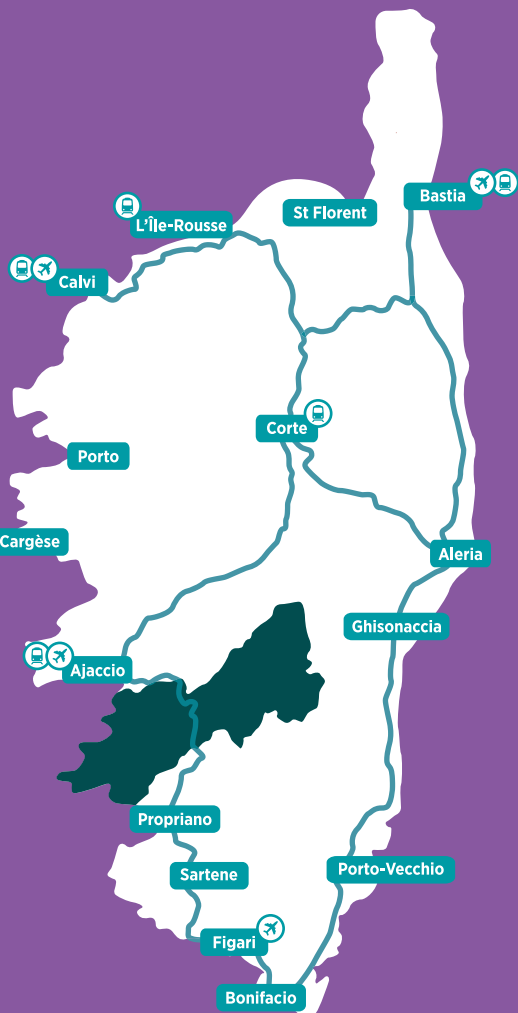


EXPLO

DISCOVERY TOURS
OF THE UPPER TARAVO
Villages, Cuscionu plateau



PORTICCIO
TARAVO
ORNANO



OFFICE DE TOURISME INTERCOMMUNAL
DE PORTICCIO-TARAVO-ORNANO



info@porticcio-tourisme.com



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01 TOUR
CULTURAL STOPOVER

02 TOUR
NATURAL SPACE



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DISCOVERY TOURS OF THE UPPER TARAVO

All our **Discovery Tours** maps, specially designed to facilitate and enrich your visits to our region, are available at the **Porticcio-Taravo-Ornano Intercommunal Tourist Office**.

Your Tourist office wishes you
a wonderful stay throughout our
region!

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The elements of the history and evolution of the Taravo basin over the centuries indicates that an agropastoral society established on the plains gradually took into account the natural environment to become an agrosylvopastoral society, leading to the creation of around ten pivotal villages in the upper valley around the 15th century. The communes of the Upper Taravo, formerly called Talavo, were thus established on the foothills of the mountains rising on either bank of the Taravu River. The river has its source north of Monte Grosso, at an altitude of almost 1,580 meters, in the commune of Palneca.

Amidst the Larici pines, chestnut trees, century-old beeches, or the grassy plateaus of Cuscionu, animals (whether pigs, horses, oxen or dormouses) have always shared their territory with the people who decided to settle there. The inhabitants of the Upper Taravo gradually learned to

make the most of the natural resources this mountainous region offered them. In this endeavor of cohabitation and domestication, pork breeding gradually established itself as the most suitable for the terrain, climate and available food resources. Filled with acorns and chestnuts, the region's pigs quickly imparted the unique flavor to Talavese charcuterie, and human expertise did the rest.

Today, Upper Taravo has retained its identity while opening up to quality tourism. Lovers of nature, wide open spaces, and babbling rivers will undoubtedly find their happiness and invigorating tranquility here, far from the hustle and bustle of the coast.



Corsican roads offer magnificent views, but some can be narrow, winding, or in poor condition. We advise you to remain vigilant and adapt your driving.



TOUR 01

CULTURAL STOPOVER

Fifty kilometers from Porticcio, you'll find yourself at the foot of the Corsican mountains. Covered with forests of Larici pines, chestnut trees, and beeches, the hillsides of the upper Taravo Valley are dotted with villages and hamlets whose tranquility, authenticity, and heritage will captivate you and make your stay even more rewarding.

01 GUITERA



Your tour begins in **GUITERA** (Vutera in Corsican). You'll reach this small mountain village via the D28 road, once renowned for its sulfurous thermal waters, whose inlet is located in the lower part of the village, I Bagni di Vutera.

In the upper village, the 17th-century **Saint-Pierre church** stands in the center, with its bell tower. In the town, there's also a **ruined Romanesque chapel**, also dedicated to Saint Peter, which has been converted into a tomb. The site of the former Pièvane church now houses a **pleasant picnic area**, overlooking a stream. Two farm inns await you, where you can enjoy delicious cuisine and local produce.

02 GIOVICACCE



Just 10 minutes from Guitera, you'll discover **GIOVICACCE**, one of the two hamlets in the municipality of Sampolu. This small village has preserved two 19th-century watermills, one for chestnuts and the other for felling, both testaments to the fabric manufacturing process in the village and its surrounding area.

03 TASSO



From Giovicacce, you will continue on the D28 road towards Sampolu. A junction with the D128 invites you to make a short loop (5 minutes drive) through the chestnut trees which will take you to **TASSO**, with its **typical 18th century houses and fountains** perched at an altitude of 850 m. Built in 1885 on the site of the old Romanesque church, the **church of San Giacomo**, with its **steep bell tower**, contains a **carved wooden Christ**. An ancient arca, a collective tomb, still recalls the Romanesque origins of the church. In the vicinity of the village, **several Bronze Age** remains punctuate the landscape: U Casteddu di Pisola, Castellari, Machja Vardata... There is also a curious flat stone, overlooking the Foruli, a tributary of the Taravo, called the **Stone of Sin**, which is said to have been used for human sacrifices and which the locals believe to be haunted. The village of Tasso is famous for its **chestnut flour** and its **charcuterie**.

04 SAMPOLO



Continue along the D128 to **SAMPOLO**, which will charm you with its old-world charm. **Built on a medieval settlement**, Sampolu underwent renovations in the 17th and 18th centuries. Carefully decorated **houses of notables** appeared, fairly well preserved today. The **very old San Polu church**, restructured in the 17th century, stands in the heart of Sampolu. The inhabitants celebrate their protector, Saint Paul, on June 29. On a hill facing the church, you will see the ruins of a **medieval hamlet and the San Chirgu chapel**. Within the village, you can also find the **Fontaine de Cupala**, a typical Corsican fountain, built of pebbles. With around sixty year-round residents, the town of Sampolu comes alive every summer. We then observe the return to the roots of the diaspora, but also a certain development of tourism, driven by the presence of the **"Mare a mare center"**, one of the most beautiful hikes in Corsica linking Ghisonaccia to Porticcio.

05 CIAMANNACCE



Your tour then takes you to the village of **CIAMANNACCE**, which harmoniously groups its **granite houses** with tiled roofs, surrounded by an **ancient oak forest and beautiful chestnut groves**. On the surrounding peaks, you can discover the **ruins of ancient towers** and 16th-century grape crushers. It was in the early 16th century that its inhabitants, rallied to Rinuco della Rocca, rebelled against Genoa and were massacred by the Genoese captain Nicolo Doria. The **parish church A Nunziata**, built in 1930 in the neo-Romanesque style, houses a **tabernacle dating from the Italian Renaissance** as well as frescoes from the 16th and 17th centuries. Also worth seeing is the Santa Lucia chapel, with its miraculous spring that gushes from a beautiful, recently restored granite fountain.

06 PALNECA



A 5-minute drive from Ciamannacce, you'll discover the village of **PALNECA**, nestled among **beech and Corsican pine forests**. Its **pretty old granite houses** perch on the mountainside at an altitude of 900 meters, on the **Punta di Faiu Tundu**. Nested in the heart of the Corsican Regional Natural Park, the village of Palneca is located on the **GR20 hiking trail**. Within the **Saint Antoine national forest**, you'll find the **chapel of Sant'Anto di U Porcu**, an important place of worship for the locals, who organize a pilgrimage and festival on July 28th. **Palneca was reportedly founded by two brothers, Bartoli and Santonu**. Hence the two most famous surnames in Palneca: Bartoli and Santonu. Surrounded by numerous hiking trails, the area is particularly appreciated for its landscapes, tranquility, and natural setting. Not far from there, about twenty minutes along the D69 towards Ghisoni, is one of the four «great passes» of Corsica and a crossing point of the GR20: the **Col de Verde** (Foci di Verdi). From its height of 1289 m, you are faced with a breathtaking landscape, well worth the detour.

07 COZZANO



From Palneca, take the D28 then the D69 to reach **COZZANO**. Located at an altitude of approximately 750 m, the village will charm you with its panoramic view of the surrounding **granite peaks, beech and pine forests, and a vast chestnut grove**. Having replaced the medieval town built near the old **Saint-Césaire church**, the ruins of which are still visible, the current village is grouped around the **old Sainte-Marie oratory, which became a parish church in the mid-17th century**. It was only at the end of the 19th century that Cozzano experienced real expansion. The **Parata district** then developed with the **construction of vast, imposing, and elegant notable houses**, several of which are **listed in the General Inventory of Cultural Heritage**. Several hiking trails can be taken from the village. **Not to be missed: U Mondu di U Porcu (the House of the pig)**, a place dedicated to pig breeding and processing, the most representative know-how of the Taravo Valley. **Through a tour that is both educational and fun**, you will discover the links between the inhabitants of this territory and its emblematic animal, the pig.

08 ZICAVO



Continue your tour to **ZICAVO**. A **stronghold of the Abbattuci family**, it is a village of character between mid and high mountains, **between the Incudine massif and the Col de la Vaccia**. Perched at an altitude of 800 m, with its **granite houses** with porches featuring sculpted keystones, the oldest of which, **Casa Gaudiani**, dates back to 1440, Zicavo proudly displays its rich cultural heritage. Admire a 17th-century **painting depicting the mystical marriage of Saint Catherine, in the parish church dedicated to Saint Luxor**, a Christian martyr particularly venerated in Sardinia, whose feast day is celebrated on August 21. **Several chapels** dot the landscape of Zicavo, dedicated to **San Roccu, San Bastianu, and San Petru**. The latter, about 8 km from the village, is reputed to be miraculous and was a place of pilgrimage until the 19th century. Not to be missed, 1 km from the village exit via the D69, at the **Camara bridge**, is a beautiful, **refreshing waterfall**. A little paradise for hikers, the village is the starting point for several hikes through this land of chestnut and beech trees, leading to the neighboring peaks and villages (Cozzano, Ciamannacce, Tasso, etc.).

09 BAINS-DE-GUITERA



Leave the village of Zicavo via the D757A road. Arriving at the intersection with the D757, take the direction of Ajaccio. You will then pass by the **BAINS-DE-GUITERA** where you will find, below the gas station, a **small reservoir filled with hot sulfurous water at around 47°C**, the dome protecting the source, as well as the thermal establishment, today in ruins, but which is the subject of a rehabilitation project. An ideal place to stretch your legs after this rich day of discovery.

TOUR 02

NATURAL SPACE

Situated between the high valleys of the Taravo, the main tributaries on the right bank of the Rizzanese (Codi and Chiuvene) and the ridge that leads to the Alcludina (Monte Incudine, 2,134 m), this **grassy plateau extends over approximately 11,000 ha**. Along **bucolic paths that will take you in the footsteps of the Taravo shepherds**, set off to discover this unique natural site, where flora and fauna roam freely.

THE CUSCIONU PLATEAU



To reach the plateau, take the D69 road from Zicavo towards the Col de la Vaccia. At the junction with the D428, turn left towards San Petru / U Cuscionu. You will pass the **Bergerie de Basseta** (on your left). You can then **drive up to the San Petru (Saint Pierre)** dirt parking lot. Cyclists can **rent an electric mountain bike** here and set off on a self-guided or guided tour to explore the site.

Among the trails available, why not take the famous GR20? Rest assured, this section is easy and accessible for young and old alike. The trail will take you past the **Matalza refuge**, then the **Bergerie de Croci** (see map opposite). From there, the «Petite Randonnée» trail will take you to the plateau, where you will discover **vast expanses of lush green grass, crisscrossed by streams and dotted with pozzines**. You can then climb to Castellu d'Ornucciu (at an altitude of 1,746 m, with a 200 m elevation gain from the plateau), before retracing your steps. **Allow a full day for this hike** (between 6 and 7 hours round trip from San Petru to Castellu d'Ornucciu).

You'll experience a privileged encounter with Corsican nature... and its inhabitants, as you'll undoubtedly spot horses, cows, or pigs grazing freely there!



Appointment with Corsican nature

At an altitude ranging between 1,400 m and 1,700 m, the plateau is formed by a series of granite ridges separated by more or less steep-sided valleys and vast flat areas. Its geomorphology bears the traces of Quaternary glaciations (smoothed relief, moraines, erratic blocks), from which granite chaos emerges, dominated by stacks of boulders (Castellu d'Ornucciu, Punte Sistaja, Frauletta, etc.).

The Cuscionu plateau offers a great diversity of landscapes that makes it unique. Its **famous pozzines**, small pools of water and grassy islets, found particularly near Piamu d'Ornucciu, were created by the melting of the ice age snow. The granite rock contrasts with the verdant meadows, creating in places a formidable jumble of shapes and colors. The aconite, a small, endemic (and poisonous) purple flower, adds a touch of fantasy to this dreamlike landscape.

Nowhere better than on Cuscionu can one observe the contrast between the damp depressions dotted with **pozzì** («wells») localities where the peat bog is punctuated by deep pools) and adorned in August by clusters of aconite flowers, and their slopes where thorny xerophytes grow, forming veritable heaths of dwarf fruiting plants with a typical cushion-like habit, dominated by false bell broom and Etna barley.

The main characteristic of the plateau is the existence of **numerous cattle and pigs roaming freely**. Since the mid-20th century, they have gradually replaced the flocks of sheep and goats, which still numbered 8,000 in 1950 and are now represented only by rare and small herds.

The **pastoral vocation of the plateau** is attested as early as the 16th century, since Monsignor Giustiniani cites the figure of 300 sheepfolds around 1530. **Horses are also visible on the pozzines**, in connection with a certain development of equestrian activity. Other mammals are much more discreet and difficult to see: bearded vultures and golden eagles, woodcocks, thrushes, salamanders, euprots, black-bellied trout in the streams, dormouse in the beech forest, wild boar, etc.

● MOUNTAIN BIKE RENTAL WITH E.BIKE MOUNTAIN



At the Saint-Pierre car park, located at the entrance to the Cuscionu Plateau, you can **rent an electric mountain bike** from our partner, E.BIKE Mountain. You can explore the Plateau by mountain bike, either independently or accompanied by a guide if you're in a group of at least 5 people (reservations recommended).

Contact: +33 6 11 03 85 90
For more information on mountain bikes: www.ebike-mountain.com

● SHEEPFOLD OF BASSETA



Located off the D428, in a vast wooded estate crossed by a river, surrounded by goats, horses, cows, and pigs... the Basseta sheepfold offers a variety of accommodations (dormitories, chalets, tent pitches), as well as a restaurant where you can enjoy home-style cooking and meats cooked over a brazier in the old sheepfold, a room with a relaxed and warm atmosphere where the entire team welcomes you every day from Monday to Sunday, morning, noon, and evening. Soft drinks and snacks are available throughout the day.

Shop: You'll find farm produce, local products, basic groceries, and hiking supplies.

Mountain bikes are available free of charge for all guests staying at least one night.

Recreational activities and activities on the estate:

Hiking: Several trails and varying difficulty levels, maps available.

No-Kill Trout Fishing: Rod and accessory rentals.

Mountain Biking: Mountain bike rentals, several trails and maps available.

Activities: Boules pitch, board games.

For more information: www.bergerie-de-basseta.fr

● REFUGE OF MATALZA



Located at the entrance to the Cuscionu Plateau, the refuge offers breathtaking views of Incudine (2,134 m), the highest peak in Southern Corsica, from its terrace. The refuge is open daily from 7:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m. and offers a wide range of services:

Accommodation: 12-bed dormitory, bivouac area, and an unusual accommodation that will allow you to observe the splendor of a starry sky at an altitude of 1,430 meters.

Bar: Daily service to eat in or take away (various drinks, soft drinks, and hot beverages).

Food 7/7: Family-style dining offering quality service using fresh produce and locally sourced produce. Breakfast is served from 7:00 to 9:00.

lunch from 12:00 to 15:00, and a coffee/snack break from 15:00 to 18:00. Dinner is served only once at 19:00 (reservations required).

Refreshments: A grocery store on site offers cheeses, family-style charcuterie, terrines, fresh bread, sandwiches, picnics, sweet groceries, homemade desserts, and more.

Other services: a drinking water source is available at the entrance to the refuge, along with Wi-Fi, restrooms, hot showers, and a battery and smartphone charging point. Don't hesitate to check the daily weather forecast with the team.

For more information: www.refugedematalza.com

● SHEEPFOLD OF CROCI



Located at an altitude of 1,550m in the center of the Cuscionu Plateau, the Croci sheepfold is the highest sheepfold on the plateau, 1 hour 45 minutes from Monte Incudine, the highest peak in Southern Corsica. It offers a **table d'hôte and accommodations** in a unique natural setting.

Around the friendly family meal, where **farm products** (charcuterie, jam, barbecue, myrtle, etc.) are featured, you'll spend unforgettable moments, especially in the evening when, from the panoramic terrace, you can enjoy magnificent sunsets.

Breakfast, lunch or dinner, refreshments, picnics (by reservation), and even injury assistance... various services are available to hikers staying in dormitories or bivouacs.

The Croci sheepfold also offers family weekends on the Cuscionu Plateau, in the commune of Zicavo, with hikes accessible to everyone. **A shuttle service** is available for guests from the San Petru parking lot, offering tours and tasting of local products.

Sheepfold products: Organic olive oil, clementine jam, charcuterie (sausages, coppa, prisuttu, panzetta, valetta).

Swimming area nearby.

For more information: www.gr20-croci.com