

Summary Article: **Corsica**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

Island region of France, in the Mediterranean off the west coast of Italy, north of Sardinia; it comprises the *départements* of Haute Corse and Corse du Sud; area 8,680 sq km/3,351 sq mi; population (2004 est) 273,100. The capital, Ajaccio, and Bastia (at the island's northern tip) are the chief towns and ports. The island is largely mountainous and characterized by maquis vegetation (drought-tolerant shrubs such as cork oak and myrtle). The main products are wine and olive oil; tourism is the island's economic mainstay. The languages spoken are French (official) and Corsican, an Italian dialect. The French emperor Napoleon was born in Ajaccio in 1769, the same year that Corsica became a province of France. The island's characteristic maquis has long provided ideal hideouts for bandits, and banditry remained a problem on the island until the 1930s. Vendettas, or blood feuds, between clans remained common until recent times. This practice was similar to that in Sicily and parts of southern Italy, and indicates the close ties that have continued to exist between the island and Italy.

The Phocaeans of Ionia founded Alalia in about 570 BC, and were succeeded in turn by the Etruscans, the Carthaginians, the Romans, the Vandals, and the Arabs. In 1077 Pope Gregory VII ceded the island to Pisa; Pisa and Genoa, and later Genoa and Aragon, battled for control until 1312 when Corsica fell to the Genoese. Administration of the island was in the hands of the Bank of San Giorgio in Genoa by the mid-15th century, and Genoese rule became increasingly harsh and unpopular. In the second half of the 18th century a Corsican nationalist, Pasquale Paoli (1725–1807), led an independence movement. Paoli headed a successful revolt against Genoa in 1755, but it only resulted in the cession of Corsica to France in 1768.

In World War II Corsica was occupied by Italy from 1942 to 1943. From 1962, French *pieds noirs* (refugees from Algeria), mainly vine growers, were settled in Corsica, and their prosperity helped to fan nationalist feeling, which demands an independent Corsica. This fuelled the National Liberation Front of Corsica (FNLC), banned in 1983, which has engaged in some terrorist bombings (a truce began in June 1988 but ended in January 1991). In 1991, the island was granted special status as a territorial 'collective' with its own elected regional assembly.

Physical Corsica lies to the north of Sardinia, from which it is divided by the Strait of Bonifacio. Its greatest length is 180 km/112 mi, and width 80 km/50 mi. It has several rivers, of which the longest is the Golo. The coastline is rugged, and has many bays and harbours, the main ones being Porto, Sagone, Ajaccio, Valinco, St-Florent, Ile Rousse, and Calvi. The climate varies from warmth in the lowlands to extreme cold in the mountain regions, where there is snow on the highest summits for six months of the year.

Economy The soil is varied in quality. Improvements have been made on the agricultural plain of eastern Corsica. The uncultivated districts are covered with a dense growth of arbutus, thorn, myrtle, and broom, known as maquis. The island's economy today is based on tourism. Agricultural production centres on the cultivation of citrus fruits, grapes, olives, vegetables, cork, and tobacco; the rearing of sheep and goats is also important, particularly for the production of high-quality cheeses. The chief exports are cheese, wine, fruit, olive oil, cork, and tobacco. Anthracite, antimony, copper, silver, lead, and valuable stones, such as marble and alabaster, are mined. At Guagno, Pardina, Guitera, and Orezza

there are mineral springs.

Corsica has 25% more retired inhabitants than anywhere else in France. The lack of economic opportunities means that emigration (mainly to Mexico and Central America) is common, but many return upon retirement.

Government Corsica's special status involves a 61-member regional parliament with the power to scrutinize French National Assembly bills applicable to the island and propose amendments.

Early history Corsica was known to the ancient Greeks as Kyrnos. The earliest inhabitants were probably Ligurian, and the first civilized people who established themselves there were the Phocaeans of Ionia, who landed in about 560 BC, and founded the town of Alalia. At the end of the 6th century these people were driven out by the Etruscans, who in their turn had to make way for the Carthaginians, and these again were followed by the Romans.

In time the Genoese came into possession of the island; they surrendered it to the French, being unable to subdue the Corsicans who had risen under General Pasquale Paoli. Britain was appealed to for assistance, and in 1794, after hard fighting, Corsica offered sovereignty to George III of Great Britain. British rule lasted for two years, then Corsica passed once more to France, and since the settlement of 1815 they have remained united.

Corsica in World War II On 11 November 1942, after the successful landing of Allied forces in North Africa, Hitler sent German troops into unoccupied France, and invited Italian troops to occupy Corsica, asserting that the move was necessary to forestall Allied plans for an attack on the island and on the south coast of France. French troops (non-Vichy) liberated Corsica on 4 October 1943, German consolidation on the island having been prevented by the prompt action of local patriots before the landing of Free French forces. The Italian part of the garrison held Bastia long enough to get their forces away. The conquest of Corsica by the Allies was a strategic blow against the whole German position in Italy.

Recent history French prime minister Lionel Jospin unveiled a plan in July 2000 for limited autonomy for the government of Corsica. In an attempt to end 20 years of violence on the island, he proposed a single political and administrative body with limited independent law-making powers. The proposals marked a great departure from the tradition of heavy-handed government from Paris, but were not met with universal acceptance in Corsica. A series of unclaimed bomb attacks in July and August 2001 threatened to destabilize the peace process. The attacks appeared to be aimed directly at undermining the negotiations on Corsican devolution initiated by Jospin, and were widely blamed on the nationalist splinter group Armata Corsa (Corsican Army). In October 2001, nationalist groups declared Jospin's autonomy plan to be unworkable.

APA

Chicago

Harvard

MLA

Corsica. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather*

guide. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from
<https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/corsica>



© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.



© RM, 2018. All rights reserved.

APA

Corsica. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. Abington, UK: Helicon. Retrieved from <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/corsica>

Chicago

"Corsica." In *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon. Helicon, 2018. <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/corsica>

Harvard

Corsica. (2018). In Helicon (Ed.), *The Hutchinson unabridged encyclopedia with atlas and weather guide*. [Online]. Abington: Helicon. Available from: <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/corsica> [Accessed 16 October 2019].

MLA

"Corsica." *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*, edited by Helicon, 2018. *Credo Reference*, <https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/corsica>. Accessed 16 Oct. 2019.