

Meetings in Corsica

Reviewing the MICE possibilities of one of the world's most beautiful islands

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From left to right: Guy Verbist (BCD Meetings & Events), Charlotte Eeman (Keep in Touch), Giuseppa d'Angelo (Tellus), Karin de Graauw (BBT Online), Cindy Planer (CWT Meetings & Events), Marie-Ange-Celli (Agence du Tourisme de la Corse), Brigitte Boone (@dmire), Anouk Carryn (FCM Travel Solutions)

BBT Online's publisher Karin de Graauw joined a group of Belgian MICE agents for a four day famtrip to Corsica. Organised by the Corsican Tourist Board (ATC), Air Corsica and Atout France: the French Convention Bureau, the trip allowed the group to discover the French island's most exciting spots: from interesting visits to the best venues in Bastia and Ajaccio to exploring beautiful private seaside domains, it would prove to be a varied trip.

Whoever sees the rugged coastline of Corsica rise up from the Mediterranean waters for the first time, knows that this is an island like few others in Europe. Part of France for more than 200 years now, it feels quite different from the mainland across the sea: a different kitchen, different customs, a different language and a different feel altogether. Corsica is a place on its own, inhabited by people proud of their heritage and history. Roughly four times smaller than our own little Belgium, the island's scenery is

surprisingly diverse for its size. You can visit vibrant historical cities, green forests, beautiful beaches, imposing mountains, lush valleys and tiny rural villages, all just a relatively short drive away from each other. The activities Corsica offers are varied as well, especially for those of you in love with the outdoors. From hiking, biking and canyoning to snorkelling, boat trips or just spending your day on the beach with a cocktail at hand: there's something for everyone to enjoy.

After a short **Air Corsica** flight from Charleroi, our group landed in **Bastia**, where we were greeted by **Marie-Ange Battistelli** of the **Corsica Convention Bureau**. As a first introduction to the destination, we would be guided through the city and its main hotspots. Bastia strangely is France's second busiest passenger port, which makes for a lively town year-round. The historic centre spreads over two main areas: **Terra Vecchia** based around the original harbour, and the walled

city above called **Terra Nova**. We would make a first stop at the **Palais des Gouverneurs**: a fortified palace housing the **Bastia Museum**. Some of the halls in the palace itself can be used for events of up to 90 people: allowing for functions in a beautiful historic setting. The palace's courtyard, garden and the auditorium (99 pax) are available for events as well. Right next to it is the beautiful **Hôtel des Gouverneurs**, which has 29 rooms. www.hoteldesgouverneurs.fr

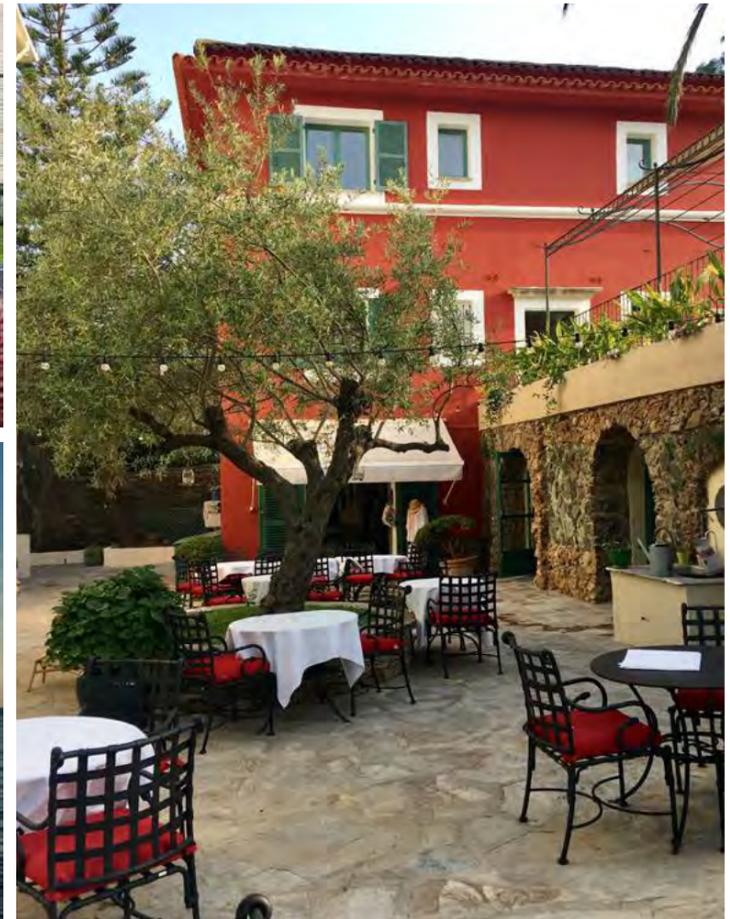
After exiting the museum, we were headed to **Boutique Cap Corse – Maison Mattei**, where we could enjoy some of the local delicacies, like a traditional quinquina aperitif. Lots of local foods and wines were for sale as well, and the boutique can be privatised for smaller events or tastings. www.capcorsemattei.com

Our first night on Corsica would be spent at **Hotel Castel Brando**: a charming boutique hotel in the middle of Cap Corse, just 15 minutes from the city. It's based

in a 19th century mansion and surrounded by a lush palm tree park. It has a spa and a 50m² meeting room. Bigger events (30 inside, up to 180 in the garden) can be held in the **Pozzo Convent** just 10 minutes away. www.castelbrando.com, www.couventdepozso.com

A visit to the capital

Our second day would mostly be spent in **Ajaccio** – the island's lively capital – but first we'd make some other stops. After breakfast, we left for **Parc Galea** in Taglio Isolaccio. An interesting place covering nine hectares of multimedia museums, exhibition galleries, screening rooms and landscaped gardens: all built to allow you to discover the natural and cultural heritage of Corsica in a fun way. This is a great site to consider if you're looking for something different for your next event. It comes with a hall that can fit 550 people in conference style, and a smaller room that can accommodate up to 90 guests. www.parcgalea.com



Later that morning, we visited another boutique hotel. **Hôtel Dominique Colonna** is a beautiful place in the mountains bordering a river, offering 27 rooms, two suites and a wellness centre. Looked like a nice venue to relax in. www.dominique-colonna.com

After lunch, we headed to Ajaccio. With over 70,000 inhabitants, it's Corsica's largest city. The place is vivid and looks a bit like the Côte d'Azur. It has a pastel-toned historic centre full of bars and restaurant, and a trendy waterfront where sunbathers hang out by day and party crashers by night. The historic core is a maze of atmospheric little lanes. It's also the place where **Napoleon Bonaparte** was born and where he now has his own museum. We would visit the **Musée Fesch** instead though, named after the Cardinal and major art collector who built it. The art collection exhibited here is vast, and the courtyard can be privatised for events of up to 290 people.

Afterwards, we visited the **City Hall** and its **Salons Napoléoniens**. Here you can have cocktail parties or receptions for up to 80 people. This is where the VIPs of most important international congresses are usually officially welcomed as well. www.musee-fesch.com

Next on the programme was **l'Espace Diamant**. This is a hall right in the middle of the city centre. It was completely renovated less than 10 years ago, and makes for an ideal space for conferences and meetings of medium size. It comes with a 315 seat auditorium, a 150m² showroom and multiple modular meeting rooms. www.espace-diamant.ajaccio.fr

Last stop for the day was **Le Lazaret**: a large building shaped like a horseshoe located near the end of Ajaccio Bay. It was built in the mid-nineteenth century and was classified as a historic monument. It houses the art of sculptor Marc Petit and comes with four 30m² meeting



rooms, a 250m² patio suitable for up to 500 people standing and 300 seated, and a 100m² seaside garden. www.l lazaret-ollandini.com

Our remaining nights on the islands would be spent in **Hotel Radisson** in Porticcio, housing 170 rooms and suites with private terraces, a fine-dining restaurant (where we had dinner), two bars, a spa and seven meeting rooms (four of them able to be combined to a 250 people event space. www.radissonblu.com/en/resort-ajacciobay/)

Discovering the island by boat

The next day began with a workshop in the **Palace of Congress** in Ajaccio, where we would meet **Daniel Charavin**, the **Director of the Corsica Tourism Bureau**, **Michel Ponzevera**, **Deputy Director of Sales & Marketing at Air Corsica** and a lot of other local suppliers. The Palace is a venue for big events, with 9 modular meeting rooms with a variety of capacities (up to 200 pax), an auditorium that seats 434 people, a panoramic restaurant for 500 people and a large multi-

use space that covers 1000 m², it is entirely adaptable and perfect for congresses of up to 650 pax as well as other events.

After the workshop and a short walk through the local market, we visited **Hotel Palazzo U Domu**: a stylish place with 42 rooms in the city centre. www.palazzo-domu.com

Afterwards, it was time to discover a couple of the more adventurous venues on offer here. We took a **Nave Va** (www.naveva.com) ship and sailed straight to **Domaine de Saparella**. This is an 80 hectare natural domain in private hands, facing the **Îles Sanguinaires**. It has a beach bar that can accommodate up to 450 people for a gala dinner and has 120 beds in spacious tents, two open air bathrooms, a restaurant with a covered terrace that can be used as a meeting room for 80 people and Wi-Fi all over the place. Maybe this is the spot you need if you're worried your delegates will take off during the meetings. www.julienjet.com





Corsica Convention Bureau

The Corsica Convention Bureau provides the main contact point for event organisers and guarantees the liaison with experienced professionals within this sector.

It is on hand to assist from the initial prospecting phase onwards, giving advice and facilitating the organisation of your project; listings of all the reception venues available, service providers, transport options, providing tailor-made solutions and well-equipped infrastructures in order to welcome your business clients in accordance with your specific requirements.

For more info, click www.visit-corsica.com or contact Marie-Ange Celli-Battistelli via macelli@ctc-atc.com

Atout France

Atout France is the country's tourism development agency and is responsible for strengthening the position of France as a destination. They provided over 1.300 partners with the tools to understand touristic demand and offers them marketing and promotional activities in order to strengthen their international development.

For more info, click www.atout-france.fr.

Gisèle Jamin is responsible for promotion and events. Contact her via Gisele.jamin@atout-france.fr or via +32 2 505 38 13.

Air Corsica

For more info, click www.aircorsica.com or mail them at espacepro@aircorsica.com



After visiting the five-star **Sofitel Thalassa Sea & Spa Hotel** on our last morning (98 rooms, 3 modular meeting rooms for 120 guests in total and a nice spa), we would go and check out another private domain that can be used for events.

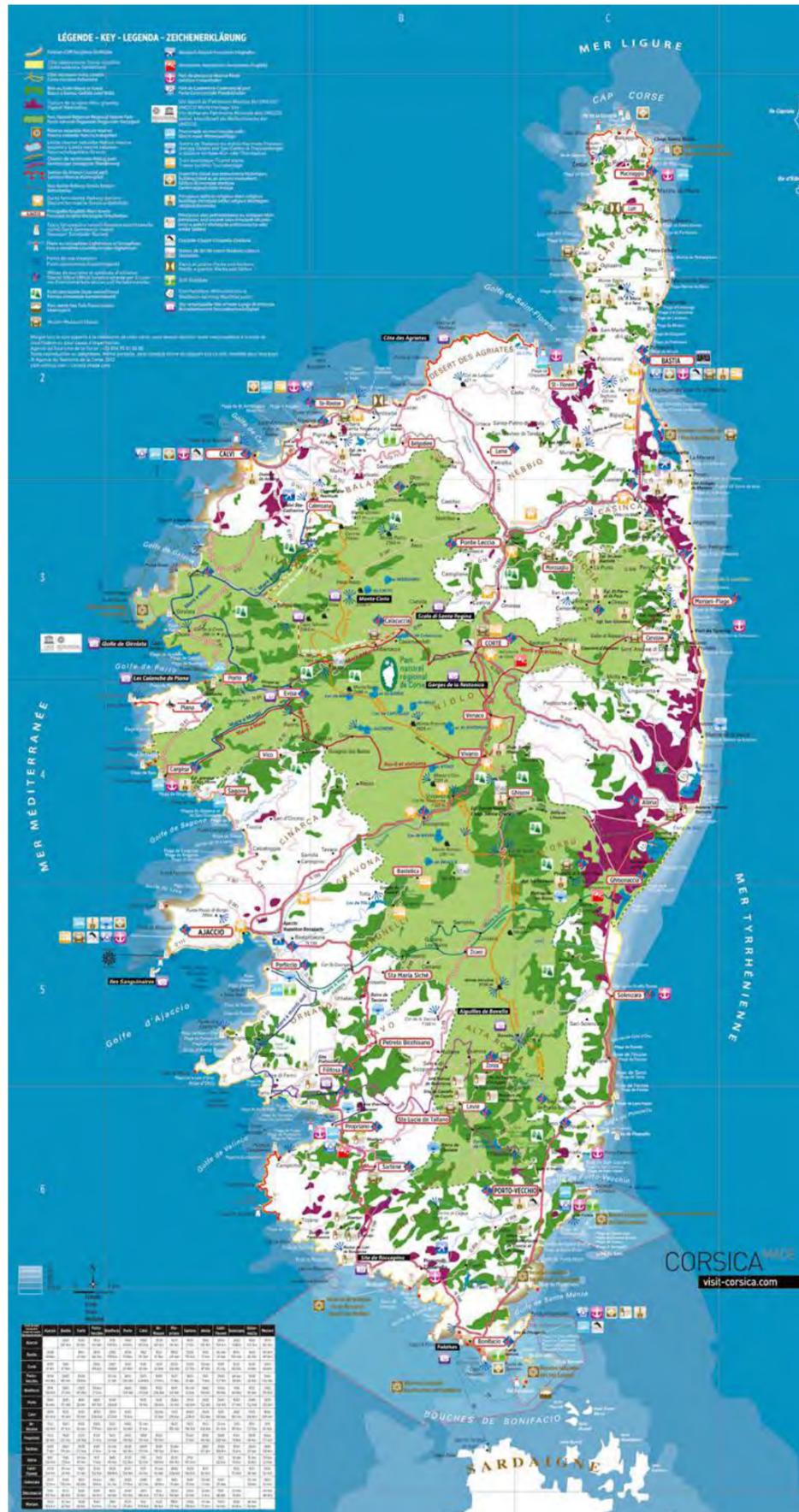
www.sofitel.accorhotels.com

Domaine de Cala di Fica is located 45 minutes from Ajaccio and is based in a protected area that can only be accessed by boat, 4x4 or kayak. It's suitable for groups of up to almost 500 people. It comes with a bivouac installed around a bungalow with warm douches and electricity. Dinners take place on the terrace or around a campfire, and meals are prepared with seasonal ingredients only. Lots of teambuilding and incentive activities are provided by **Appietto Incentives**. Perfect place for a sustainable event.

www.appietto-incentive.com

These few days on Corsica really showed us the diversity the island has to offer. The variety of landscapes and natural wonders is vast, and there are both historic and modern places to choose from as far as event venues go. A splendid destination it is, with lovely beaches, lively cities, great food, happy people and lots of possibilities for every incentive organiser. And it's all just an hour and a half away from Brussels. A option to consider for your next endeavour for sure, if you're looking for a lot of things to do on a relatively small patch of land.

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Interesting DMCs for activities on Corsica

Corsica Events

Contact : Anne Catherine Mariani
Tel : 00.33.495.23.92.45
infos@corsicaevents.com
www.corsicaevents.com

Corse Incentive

Contact : François-Xavier Dianoux-Stefani
& Jean-Philippe Banghala
Tel: 0 972 550 812 et 04 95 56 59 47
contact@corse-incentive.com
www.corse-incentive.com

Event' Com Voyages

Contact : Jean-Marc Hubert
Tel: 04 95 73 24 07 – 06 20 77 25 87
info@eventcom.travel
www.eventcom.travel

Corsica Exclusive - DMC

Contact : Fanny Carré
Tel : +33 (0)6 41 61 41 02
fanny@corsica-exclusive.com
www.corsica-exclusive.com

Cors'Alpha Touring

Contact : Nathalie Barr
nathalie@corsalpha.com
Tel: +33(0)4 95 21 79 06
nathalie@corsalpha.com
www.corsalpha.com

Linea Events

Contact : Laurent Lorenzini & Gwendaline Gault
Tel: 00 33 495 57 21 93
groupes@lineavoyages.com
www.lesvoyageslinea.com

DMC Corse Escapades

+ 33 (0)4 95 23 92 44
info@corse-escapades.com
www.corse-escapades.com

Interesting hotels on Corsica

Around Bastia, Cap Corse, Calvi and Saint-Florent

Hôtel le Minuscu 5*: 29 rooms and suites
www.hotel-misincu.fr
Hôtel La Dimora 4*: 15 rooms, 2 suites
www.ladimora.fr
A Piattatella 4*: 17 rooms
www.hotel-corse-apiattatella.com
Le Loredana 4*: 23 rooms
www.demeureloredana.com
La Roya 4*: 34 rooms
www.hotelroya.com
Le Liberata 4*: 22 rooms
www.hotel-ilerousse.com
Perla-Rossa, 4*: 10 suites
www.perlarossa.com
Chez Charles, 4*: 29 rooms
www.hotelcorse-chezcharles.com
La Villa, 5*: 56 rooms
www.hotel-lavilla.com
La Signoria, 5*: 24 rooms
www.auberge-relais-lasignoria.com

Around Ajaccio and Valinco

Demeure les Mouettes 4*: 26 rooms
www.hotellesmouettes.fr
Dolce Vita 4*: 32 rooms
www.hoteldolcevita.com
Le Golf Piscine & Spa Casanera 4*: 18 rooms
www.hotel-porto-pollo.com
Le Marinca & Spa 5: 56 rooms
www.hotel-marinca.com
Lilium Maris 4*: 29 rooms
www.lilium-maris.com
Hôtel Miramar 5*: 21 rooms & 5 suites
www.miramarmboutiquehotel.com

Around Porto-Vecchio

Moby Dick 4 *: 44 rooms
www.sud-corse.com
Grand Hotel Cala Rossa 5*: 55 rooms
www.hotel-calarossa.com
Les Bergeries de Palombaggia 5*
www.hotel-palombaggia.com
Hôtel le Goéland 4*: 33 Rooms
www.hotelgoeland.com
Le Mariosa 4*: 27 Rooms
www.hotelmariosa.com

Le Belvédère 4*: 15 rooms, 4 suites,
www.hbcorsica.com
Le Don César 5*: 39 rooms,
www.hoteldoncesar.com
Ferme Auberge A Pignata 4*: 17 rooms and 2
luxury tree cabins
www.apignata.com

Around Bonifacio

Le Casadelmar 5*: 34 rooms,
www.casadelmar.fr
La Plage Casadelmar 5*: 15 rooms
www.laplagecasadelmar.fr
Le Capu Biancu 4*: 43 rooms
www.ucapubiancu.com
A Cheda 4*: 16 rooms
www.acheda-hotel.com
Hôtel & Spa des pêcheurs 4*: 48 rooms
www.hoteldespecheurs.com
Hotel Version Maquis Citadelle, 5*: 14 suites
www.versionmaquis.com

Contacts for places mentioned above

Parc Galea: Fabrice Fenouillere
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Hotel Palazzu u Domu: Sandrine Mennouvrier
hebergement@hotelpalazzu.com
Hotel Castel Brando, Julien Pieri
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Domaine de Cala di Fica, Alexandre Appietto
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Contact Domaine Saparella, Marco de Susini
julienjet2a@gmail.com
Sommelier on the Nave Va ship:
Raphael Pierre-Bianchetti
rpierrebianchetti@gmail.com
Guide Virginie Ferrand: vfsereni@gmail.com

Good beach clubs

Ajaccio
La Plage d'Argent, Le Week-end, Coté Plage, A Vela
Bianca
Bonifacio
B52, Da Passano, LolaPalooza
Porto Vecchio
Via Notte, L'Oasis, La Plage, Sea Lounge, Palm
Beach Palombaggia, Tamaricciu