Costa Smeralda, Maddalena e Corsica - 6 giorni

Costa Smeralda, Maddalena and Corsica - 6 days

**Day 1 Sardinia: La Maddalena - Costa Smeralda** Arrival in Olbia and departure for Palau, (Lu Palau in Gallura). Near the village, on a granite promontory shaped by the time, appears a natural sculpture that seems to have been molded by an artist: it is the rock of the Bear, the symbol of Palau, with its head facing the sea. The geographer Ptolemy (II century A.D.) testifies his knowledge since Antiquity: the ancient sailors used it as a reference point. Wrecks from various eras lie in the depths facing the sea. Boarding the ferry and a short crossing of about 20 minutes to reach the island of La Maddalena (Sa Madalena in Sardinian) connected to the island of Caprera by a bridge. There is a road that runs along its entire perimeter: 45 km. of breathtaking views. Limestone and porphyry define jagged areas, inlets, coves and beaches, while the inland is composed of gentle hills. La Maddalena gives its name to the archipelago of which it is the largest island and the national park. For a long time it was the base of the Navy, which is witnessed by the naval museum Nino Lamboglia that we will visit. Its strategic position in the Mediterranean influenced its events: in 1793 the French army led by a young Corsican officer, Napoleon Bonaparte, tried to invade it, stopped by the fleet commanded by Domenico Millelire from La Maddalena. The island attracted, among others, the attention of Admiral Nelson.

Lunch in a restaurant. Here there is a tradition of fishermen who hand down the craft from father to son: the fish therefore becomes part of many typical Maddalenian dishes. Gilt-head bream, sea bass, snapper, and bream are among the most prized fish with the most common and abundant seafood. Afternoon dedicated to the visit of the undisputed capital of the Costa Smeralda: Porto Cervo. A pleasant walk in the "Piazzetta delle Chiacchiere" often featuring film and television stars, known for its luxurious boutiques and the clubs frequented by the international jet set. The village by the sea is built around a natural bay that resembles a deer. The old port dates back to the 1960s, when with a brilliant intuition Prince Karim Aga Khan IV, fascinated by the beauty of the coastline, decided to buy the lands of this corner of Gallura, creating a paradise for elite international tourism. The center of Poltu Celvu (in Gallura) is built on an elevated floor above the port. From the Piazzetta delle Chiacchiere to the Sottopiazza there is an intrigue of narrow streets, windows and balconies. The splendid villas climb up to the surrounding hills, immersed in the Mediterranean scrub. Not to be missed is the Stella Maris church, designed by the architect Michele Busiri Vici, which dominates Porto Cervo marina. Breathtaking beaches are situated a short distance from the tourist center. In the turquoise, green and blue reflections of the sea there is the arched expanse of soft white sand of the Great Pevero, flanked by granite rocks shaped by time and Mediterranean scrub. In the evening hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight.

**Day 2 Sardinia: Caves of Neptune – Alghero** Breakfast and morning dedicated to visiting the phantasmagorical Caves of Neptune, one of the largest sea caves in Italy and one of the most fascinating natural jewels of the Mediterranean. Their formation dates back to about two million years ago: Inside them there are rooms with amazing karst formations, a white sandy beach and a huge underground lake. The coves de Neptú (in Catalan), discovered by a fisherman in the 18th century and quickly became a tourist attraction, have a horizontal development of about 4 km. The caves are accessed by land via a staircase of 654 steps, the Escala del Caborol (roe deer staircase) on the ridge of the Capo Caccia promontory. The entrance by sea is much more convenient. The touristic itinerary inside the caves is about 1 km. long. In the center stands " the holy water stoup", a monumental stalagmite that contains pools on the top that become a source of watering for the birds that nest nearby. Among large flows, at the bottom of the lake stands a characteristic stalagmite formation called "Christmas tree".

A short downhill path leads to the majestic "hall of the Reggia": an 18-metre column rises up to the vault and forms two spectacular arches, which seem to support the ceiling. This is followed by the "Smith room" (or Organ room), with the large organ, the largest column in the entire cave, whose flows resemble organ pipes. The caves were a cinematic set: in 1978 'The Island of the Fishermen' was filmed inside, whose scenery recalls the stories of Jules Verne. Lunch in a restaurant. In the afternoon visit to the historic center of Alghero, recognized as the "little Barcelona", the fishing village of Alghero is the capital of the Coral Riviera. The promontory of Capo Caccia and its lighthouse are one of the city's icons. Visit to the Cathedral of Santa Maria, Church and Cloister of San Francesco, Palazzo d'Albis, Theater, Bastions. In the evening return to the hotel, dinner and overnight.

**Day 3 Sardinia: Santa Teresa di Gallura - Corsica: Bonifacio - Porto Vecchio** After breakfast, transfer to Santa Teresa di Gallura, short visit of the historical center.Vittorio Emanuele I of Savoy founded it in 1808, renaming with the name of his wife Maria Teresa a locality called Longosardo (or Longone). The Ferrero Battery is of particular interest: ruins of fortifications from the Second World War consisting of artillery emplacements, bunkers, barracks, open-cast mines and railway links built mainly for the transport of war material and granite rock.Boarding for Corsica. After about 1 hour of navigation, arrival in Bonifacio, located on the limestone promontory overlooking the sea, with fabulous views ranging up to nearby Sardinia. Lunch in a restaurant. In the afternoon visit of Porto Vecchio, originally from Genoa. Today the Citadel has stone houses and alleys, mainly porphyry, and is surrounded by bastions. Perched on a promontory that reaches 900 meters on top of the Ospedale massif (U Spidali) is a fraction of the village built like a mountain village, the Ospedale Forest: pines, beech trees and numerous paths. After the Ospedale dam, discover the Piscia di Gallu waterfall, 60 m high. The summit of the Vacca Morta is easily accessible and worth a visit. In the evening hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight. Languages: Corsican is spoken in different variants on the island, with the exception of Bonifacio, where a Ligurian variant bonifacina is spoken.

**Day 4 Corsica: Corte – Ajaccio** Breakfast and departure for Corte, ancient and delightful historical and cultural fortified town in the heart of Corsica. Visit of the city and lunch in one of the local restaurants. Charcuterie: the most classic appetizer in Corsica made of local salami, considered among the best in the world: the prisuttu, the panzetta, the lonzu, the figatellu and the capicollu .Departure for Ajaccio, the city that on 15th August 1769 gave birth to the emperor Napoleon Bonaparte. Visit to the Maison Bonaparte, his and his family's residence, which has become a museum where family heirlooms are on display. The baroque cathedral of Notre Dame (16th century), where Napoleon was baptized, contains paintings by Delacroix and Tintoretto.In the evening hotel accommodation, dinner and overnight.

**Day 5 Corsica: Filitosa - Propriano - Sartene - Bonifacio** After breakfast, departure to Bonifacio with a stop to visit the amazing prehistoric site (8 thousand years old) of Filitosa. The owner of the land discovered the site in 1946 and discovered a magnificent series of prehistoric menhirs and granite statues carved with human representations. It is one of the most complete examples of megalithic art in the Mediterranean. The stones are arranged around a central monument, perhaps an attempt to ward off invaders.Next is Propriano, whose inhabitants are descended from Greek, Pisan and Turkish communities. The most important monument of the town is the church of Notre Dame de la Misericorde of 1864. The characteristic small port is enlivened by a fascinating combination of exclusive yachts and fishing boats; magnificent beaches of white sand and turquoise sea. Worth mentioning is the Bagno di Caldane, 20 minutes away, a natural site of sulfurous waters with therapeutic properties that gush out at a temperature of 38°C. Don't miss the medieval village of Sartene, with a long history of piracy and banditry, today a perfect example of Corsican culture and traditions. High buildings built with the rock of the hill where they rise. In the central square, nowadays the tourist heart, there is the governor's palace and the church of Sainte Marie, with its characteristic Corsican bell tower containing the cross and the chain carried by a penitent in procession. Arriving in Bonifacio, the King of Aragon's Staircase consists of 187 ancient steps dug into the cliff. The Bocche di Bonifacio is a sea strait separating Corsica from Sardinia which, at its shortest point, is about 11 km away. Lunch in a restaurant and then boarding for Santa Teresa. In the evening arrival at the hotel in Costa Smeralda, dinner and overnight.

**Day 6 Sardinia: Nuoro – Orgosolo** Breakfast and departure for Nuoro, called "the Sardinian Athens". Among the historic districts there is " Séuna", once home of farmers and artisans, and "santu Pedru", which housed shepherds and landowners. This is where the Grazia Deledda museum is located, the birthplace of the Nobel prize-winning writer, who today preserves intact the memory of an artist who opened the borders of Sardinia to the world. Visit of the historical center, including the Cathedral and the Church of N.S. delle Grazie and the Museum of Sardinian Costume and Popular Traditions. Continuation to the magical town of murals, Orgosolo, the small town of Barbagia known throughout the world for the paintings that decorate the old town. The murals tell of history, politics, daily life, but above all of tradition and Sardinia. Shepherds who take the flock to pasture, women intent on washing their clothes or collecting water at the spring, are just some of the images that tell the centuries-old history of Orgosolo.Traditional lunch with the shepherds. In the evening arrival in Olbia and return back home.