

Sailing Tuscany and Elba

Overview: cruising these waters is magic, because you can have breakfast in a quintessential Mediterranean Island like Elba or Capraia and then dinner around the wild and scottish atmosphere of Cape Corse. And sipping Tuscan wine on top of it.

The top places to visit: Fetovaia, Capraia, Centuri, Capo Corso, Elba, Macinaggio, Portoferraio



Our rating:

Wind and Sea: medium

Kids friendly: yes

Lifestyle: adventure

Gourmet: good

Mileage (approx) :110

Cruise length: at least 7 days

When to go: April to October

Harbours and marinas: reasonable in cost and number

Gourmet and restaurants: very good

Our top 3 SAILPRO anchorages

1. Cala Rossa - Capraia
2. Fetovaia - Elba
3. Cape Corse

Our Sailing notes

Weather and anchorages: the main danger in the sailing season comes from westerlies, either warm and humid Libeccio or the cold front Mistral, which can be brutal around Corsica. The beaches east of Cape Corse offer enough shelter, but sailing west of it is courting disaster. Winds ease off considerably around Elba, that provides several shelters anyway. All in all seas east of Corsica are usually benign.

Natural beauty - (seascapes and landscapes) The long coast of Elba Island provides numberless bays and coves for quiet nights. For a more dramatic landscape and if you love Scotland, add the Corsican diversion. The Island of Capraia is among the most spectacular in the Mediterranean, but if you agree that jewels are usually small, then visit Giannutri!

Local insight: One wonders if there still is such a thing as a 'native' in Tuscany, now that most English celebrities and every retired German couple have bought land and property in every corner of Tuscany, thence started making wine and olive oil... Still, they did a very good job, preserving a heritage many Italians were losing to rush behind easy profits. You might find that the language barrier does not exist around there.

Art: The Roman Villa on Giannutri is a magical place, even if most art is close by, in Pisa and Florence. The villages at Giglio and Elba, and Centuri harbour (Corsica) are worth a visit.

Lifestyle: The area of Porto Ercole and Argentario, with the close-by Capalbio, have always been a favourite among the smart and not too noisy set. Venues in the whole area are common, and fortunately targeted well far from the youngsters.

Gourmet: Where to begin? Tuscan cuisine is appreciated in the world for its fine natural and flavourful ingredients, it's a typical expression of the Mediterranean diet, considered among others, the most wholesome and tasty. Olive oil, pasta, fish and first choice meat: with this few basic ingredients the tuscan local chefs can create exceptional dishes. Among the produce of which Tuscany is of some importance is white truffles, a much appreciated variety. Other ingredients such as wild asparagus and herbage also contribute to the rediscover of simple flavourful dishes (pappa al pancotto, ribollita, hearty vegetable soups), where olive oil is the star ingredient, strictly bought from the local olive press. That easygoing Italian way of life that visitors find so alluring and desirable, la dolce vita, is indisputably linked to the Italians' instinctive knowledge of how to drink and eat well. In today's society, many ancient culinary traditions and characteristics of Italy's distinct regional cuisines are still commonplace, even more so here than other parts of Europe. Traditional recipes passed down through the family are worth their weight in gold. The dinner table is the scene of many conversations, debates and decisions; favorite foods evoke happy memories, good health and comfort. As for local ingredients, the Fiorentina steak is renowned, the unique Colonnata Lard, the savoury Bottarga from Orbetello, several types of cured meat like the Tarese and the Biroldo. Local specialties that must be tried are the famous Caciucco alla Livornese, the local tomato/garlic/oli based fish soup, the Ribollita, a vegetable and bread soup, cabbage crostini, pappardelle with hare sauce, roast loin of pork, the Stracotto (braised beef) and the Frittata di Carciofi (artichoke omelette).

Wines: world renowned Brunello, Chianti and the wines from Bolgheri like Sassicaia

Destinations: A cruise in the Northern Tyrrhenian will typically start and end either in the Elba area or in the Argentario area. The main highlights might be chosen, according to preference, in the following list.

Elba. Even if rather big is size, being the third island in Italy, it might indeed provide enough varieties for a whole week, with its different landscapes, romantic fishing villages, hamlets hidden among the hills, ancient castles, not to mention the white beaches and emerald bays!! According to the weather sail either south anchoring in Fetovaia or north stopping in Procchio or Marciana Marina. **Portoferraio** is the main harbour and offers also excellent anchorage in most conditions. This is also the main place to shop along the route.

Giglio. This small island has a magnificent harbour and a short hike will take you up to the 'Castle', a pure Genoese citadel with its alleys, shops, ladies drying their laundry by the windows and elders playing cards in the bars.

Giannutri. This tiny Island, with two magnificent coves, is definitely worth a stroll, love among the ruins style, with old marble columns and walls coming out of the perfumed pines and bushes... a magical atmosphere.

Pianosa. Now off limits, those who loved the literary cult 'Catch 22' will certainly desire to stop in this former prison island, and they will discover that the tiny harbour is picturesque but there is not a single WWII airfield... pity.

Capraia. Another former prison, closed a decade ago, Capraia deserves a visit for its dramatic wilderness and romantic harbour. Where, by the way, there is a very good restaurant. Conveniently located between Corsica and Elba, is a nice stopover, especially for hikers. The cove in the south of the island, even if not protected from all quarters, is among the best of the area.

Argentario. Attached to the mainland by a thin isthmus, the Orbetello lagoon, the Argentario peninsula is a natural reserve where many members of the old money erected their summer retreats. The balance of nature and architecture is a rare

example along the Tyrrhenian coast, and Porto Ercole, an ancient fishermen's village with unspoilt atmosphere is the sparkling center of the area.

Cape Corse. The northern tip of Corsica is something one does not expect in the Mediterranean. One of the windiest places in the Med, actually windier than Ushuaia, in the Beagle Channel (Argentine Patagonia), its high but not steep profile is as green and barren as a Scottish mountain. The famous 'Custom House Hike' will accompany the curious hikes among spectacular bays, seabird nesting points, old Genoese towers, white sand dunes and bright meadows. Macinaggio is a convenient and rather nice port, while Centuri, on the wind side, is a tiny fishermen's village that, weather permitting, will impress in one's memories.

In good weather anchor off one of the the eastern bights along the Cape, where water is pure crystal, or sail to the cosy fishing village of Centuri. In bad weather hide behind the islets north of Macinaggio, or in the harbour itself.

If good weather persists, sail to the beaches of northern Corsica, like Loto and Saleccia, renowned for its white sand and clear waters.

another very nice harbour in the area is Saint Florent. True, it's always very busy in summer and it's almost impossible to find a place during a Mistral spell, but the town is really very nice.