

restaurants can be found — many housed on defunct barges. Stroll down Skadarska, a main drag here, or relax with a Serbian coffee (similar to Turkish) on the Studentski Trg, Belgrade's oldest square. Tours of the bombed buildings are also available.

**STAY:** **Le Petit Piaf** is elegant and far superior to the former communist big-boxes and American chains outside the center of town (from **\$168/double**; Skadarska 34, [www.petitpiaf.com](http://www.petitpiaf.com)).

**EAT:** A meal at most quality restaurants here is about **\$10**. **Sesir Moj** serves Serbian cuisine, emphasizing fresh, grilled meats and vegetables. It also features a roving gypsy band (Skadarska 21).

**DO:** Entry to Yugoslavian dictator **Jozef Tito's gravesite** is free (it's on the Bulevar Mira) and is an informative reminder of the fractious history of the whole region. For a longer view of Serbian history, wander around the remains of the **Kalemegdan Citadel** in the center of town; the main gate was built in 1750 by the Turks, although the site dates back to the first century AD.

**INFO:** [tob.co.yu](http://tob.co.yu)

## CORSICA

This 3,400-square-mile Mediterranean island — French in name only — has 2 million visitors each year, about eight times the island's population. Most visitors come during July and August (Parisian families consider the island a kind of feudal vacation estate), so the mild and sunny months of June and September are the ideal — and cheaper — times to go. (Note: Many hotels are closed from October to May.)

Corsica has one of the most diverse landscapes in Europe — perfect white sand bays and jagged red rock *calanche* (cliffs), pine trees and mountain lakes. Napoleon, who was born here, claimed he could find Corsica with his eyes closed because of the distinctive smell of *maquis*, the scrubby, herbal-smelling vegetation found all over the island.

**STAY:** Drive 15 minutes north of Bastia — which is at the base of the northern pinnacle called the Cap Corse, where the ferry to Nice is — to the tiny port town of **Erbalunga**. **Hotel Castel Brando** is a family-run palazzo on the water that's slightly more expensive than the pensions that dot the island, but worth it for the beautifully restored 19th-century furnishings (from **\$150/double**; 33 04 95 30 10 30; [www.castelbrando.com](http://www.castelbrando.com)).

**EAT:** Surprisingly, you'll get relatively little seafood in Corsica, where the national foods — *sangler* (wild boar) and *brocciu* (ricotta-like goat's milk cheese) — are cheap and delicious all over the island.

In Bastia, try the tiny, homey **Le Petite Marie** for grilled langoustine fresh from the old port (dinner for less than **\$20** with local wine), (2 rue des Zephrirs).

**DO:** Corsica is all about hiking. Ambitious trekkers can take a week and travel the **GR20**, the mountain spine that runs north to south through the island's interior. Or drive to the university town of **Corte**, smack in the center of Corsica, to hike to the glacial lakes around **Valee de la Restonica** (good hiking trail info is found at [corsica-hiking.com](http://corsica-hiking.com)).

**INFO:** [visit-corsica.com](http://visit-corsica.com)

## CORFU, GREECE

Want to hang out in cafes and people-watch? This sun-bleached island, just 230 square miles, is for you.

Corfu, under Venetian or English rule for most of its history, was officially united with Greece in the 19th century. Sometimes it still seems governed by the English, who come to the island on cut-rate package tours in July and August. It's also an increasingly popular cruise ship port on Adriatic routes.

Prices haven't quite caught up with its popularity — though we expect they soon will.

**STAY:** **The Cavalieri**, a discreet little hotel in Corfu town, has a "secret" evening rooftop garden with great views of the Old

Fort. The rooms are somewhat Spartan, but well-maintained, and the location — at the far south end of the esplanade — can't be beat (from **\$80/double** in high season, including breakfast; 4 Kapodistriou, 30 26 61 03 90 41, [cavalieri-hotel.com](http://cavalieri-hotel.com)).

**EAT:** Walk one block off the main drag to **Glogias Taverna** and order anything off the spit or the grill for about **\$10** (Guilford Street).

**DO:** Walk to the top of the **old fort** on the east side of Corfu town, where the fortifications date back to the sixth century. It's the best place on the island for the stunning views of crystal clear Garitsa Bay (admission is **\$5**).

If you're on Corfu for the beaches, go straight to the less touristy southern end of the island, to the miles of sandy beach at **Vitalades**.

**INFO:** [www.virtualgreece.net](http://www.virtualgreece.net) or [www.kerkyra.net](http://www.kerkyra.net)

## CINQUE TERRE, ITALY

These five villages (Monterosso, Vernazza, Corniglia, Manarola, Riomaggiore) lie along Italy's northwestern coast, approximately 60 miles south of Genoa. Situated in a national park, Cinque Terre is a popular summer destination for hiking, but remains a simple, laid-back place off-season. Best of all, you'll never have to worry about breaking the bank.

The towns are variations on the old Italian coastal village, each offering a different specialty.

**STAY:** Few hotels in the region will beat anyone's budget, but few stand out, either. Monterosso's **Hotel Pasquale** has a dramatic location, however — perched between the cliffs and the area's only sandy beach (from **\$168/double**; [www.hotelpasquale.com](http://www.hotelpasquale.com)).

**EATS:** **La Lanterna** in Riomaggiore — the most dramatically placed of the five towns, jutting into the ocean on a rocky outcrop — offers regional seafood specialties at reasonable prices. Try the spaghetti alla scoglio with mussels and squid (**\$10**), ([www.lalaterna.org](http://www.lalaterna.org)).

**DO:** Visit the **Castello Doria** in Vernazza, with a view of the region (admission is **\$1.30**).

While hiking, check out **La Via dell'Amore** (Lover's Pathway), in Manarola, for a romantic and scenic view. Also, the regional wine cooperative based in Manarola gives free tours ([cantinacinqueterre.com](http://cantinacinqueterre.com)).

**INFO:** [cinqueterre.it](http://cinqueterre.it)

## SOPIA, BULGARIA

The capital of Bulgaria isn't pretty, but it does have a near-East influence — think of a miniaturized cross between Istanbul and Moscow. It makes up in cultural what it lacks in architectural grandeur.

Post-Cold War economic growth has been slower here than in many other former Eastern Bloc countries, and prices remain as low as Prague's in the early '90s. With a big student quarter and plenty of nightclubs on the cool side of kitsch, Sofia has plenty for anyone looking for a good, cheap time.

**STAY:** **Art 'Otel** has colorful rooms, a well-regarded restaurant and a gym (from **\$123/double**; Gladston 44, [artotel.biz](http://artotel.biz)).

**EAT:** Cheap street food, usually in the form of meat-filled pastries, is everywhere. For a good, inexpensive sit-down meal of grilled lamb, salads and yogurt, try the Bulgarian chain **Happy Bar and Grill** ([www.happy.bg](http://www.happy.bg)).

**DO:** Admission to the renowned Byzantine-style churches **Sveta Nedelya** and **Alexander Nevski** is free. Both stand on their respective squares. Make a side trip to the south of town to **Mt. Vitoshka**, or just look at it from the observation deck of the monolithic **National Palace of Culture**, a warren of cafes, shops and movie theaters (1 Bulgaria Square).

**INFO:** [bulgariatravel.org](http://bulgariatravel.org)

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Go inside Berlin's bizarre Reichstag Dome.



Boats in the harbor: A scene from Corfu.



Mighty grand: Sofia's National Palace.



Take a hike: The Mediterranean paradise of Corsica has no shortage of scenery.