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In Corsica, a Rugged Land Attracts the Boldface Set

By SETH SHERWOOD

Ask a Frenchman about Corsica and he'll probably sigh, "Ah, l'Île de la Beauté. ..." And not just because the supermodel Laetitia Casta was discovered there.

Blessed with seaside cliffs and grottoes, jagged sun-baked mountains, sublime gorges and burning white-sand beaches, this Island of Beauty bursts with fiery Mediterranean landscapes that could melt Ansel Adams's lens. These days, with rising tides of what the French call "Les Beautiful People" — from Ms. Casta to Bono to Jean-Paul Gaultier to Jean Reno — washing up in the island's medieval harbor towns and modern beach bars, the island's moniker is more apt than ever.

The nexus of V.I.P. action is Porto-Vecchio, a picturesque old Genoese port long rhapsodized over for its rustic 16th-century buildings. Thanks to the Via Notte nightclub (www.vianotte.com), a favorite of French soccer stars and film personalities, the narrow streets now echo in summer with 21st-century club beats and popping Champagne corks.

And for those lucky few who have complained that Corsica long lacked any decent hotels with a yacht mooring and a helicopter pad, the two-year-old Casadelmar (www.casadelmar.fr) should silence those mutterings. In the words of its listing with Design Hotels — the sleekest and chicest marketing group for small hotels — the Casadelmar is "heralding the start of a new jet-set era for the island."

It's the kind of braggadocio you expect in a proud land that produced Napoleon. But it might just be right.

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