



Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica

Dorothy Carrington , Rolli Lucarotti (Introduction)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) 

Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica

Dorothy Carrington , Rolli Lucarotti (Introduction)

Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica Dorothy Carrington , Rolli Lucarotti (Introduction)

'Get away from here before you're completely bewitched and enslaved...' Dorothy Carrington was told, while sitting in a fisherman's cafe at the magically quiet midday hour. But enslaved she was. "Granite Island", much more than a travel book, grew out of years spent in Corsica and is an incomparably vivid and delightful portrait. For the first time Corsica is brought to light as a vital element in Europe: a highly individualistic island culture whose people have nurtured their love of freedom and political justice, as well as their pride, hospitality and poetry.

Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica Details

Date : Published May 29th 2008 by Penguin Classics (first published 1974)

ISBN : 9780141442273

Author : Dorothy Carrington , Rolli Lucarotti (Introduction)

Format : Paperback 384 pages

Genre : Travel, Nonfiction, History, Anthropology

 [Download Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica Dorothy Carrington , Rolli Lucarotti (Introduction)

From Reader Review Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica for online ebook

Kirsty Keddie says

I read this whilst travelling through Corsica - however found this to be much more than a well written account of the island and its history. Dorothy Carrington was such an amazing character in her own right. She makes her journey and decisions with an abandon that I love her for and I am in awe at her ability and joy in grabbing every moment in her life and being un-phased by things that would terrify me - from missing busses, hitching lifts with strangers, being the only guest in hotels run by mad people...to dancing till dawn night after night with friends casually met on the way.

Paul says

A very fine description of Corsican mores, music and tradition. Like another reviewer I was a little disappointed with the lack of dates and times. Would have been nice to know what was happening at a specific time. I also felt that from time to time her aristocratic background came through in her relations with certain people, and why no mention of her divorce at all. Surely that had an influence on her passion for Corsica. A very good read but does show its age.....

Theboymallett says

For as far back as I can remember, I had wanted to visit Corsica - though I'm not quite sure why! Probably the limit of what I knew about it, aside from being an island in the Mediterranean, was via the formidable reputation of the Corsican people...

As the sinister national flag implies, Corsicans have long been regarded as the fiercest warriors in Europe. Corsican nationalism is still occasionally manifested through violence aimed at the French authorities. Visitors are told to be wary if venturing out into the interior of the island. Organised crime in southern France (notably Marseille) is said to be run by the Corsican mafia and, in the popular conscience, vehicle number plates bearing the designation '2A' or '2B' (these being the two French département numbers assigned to the island) are a sign that you shouldn't mess around with the occupants!

But the sultry allure of Corsica is so strong that mainlanders flock to the island in summer. French holidaymakers queue for hours in their tens of thousands at the ferry terminals in Marseille and Nice. Finally, this year, we decided to join them and visit Ajaccio, the capital of the island about three-quarters of the way down the west coast. After a little bit of research, Dorothy Carrington's 'Granite Island: Portrait of Corsica' unquestionably topped the list of required reading

The author first visited the island in 1948, in a quest to see some mysterious Neolithic statues that she had learned about near the coastal town of Propriano. She ended up spending the entire summer of that year touring the island, from Ajaccio across the Sartene region and down to the south coast and Bonifacio. She then ventured north along the west coast up to Bastia, across to Calvi and then back to Ajaccio via Corte and the mountainous Niolo region. Along the way, she met and stayed with Corsican families, learning about their lives, beliefs and culture. The book was written in 1971 but it is largely an account of that summer in

1948 with the additional benefit of later visits that show the ways in which Corsica has changed - and is still changing - in the latter half of the 20th Century, with the increase in tourism and the breakdown of traditional lifestyles

All in all, Mrs Carrington paints a mesmerising picture of the vast natural beauty of the island and manages to get right to the core of the Corsican people in a way that escapes any glossy tourist guide on the market. Even in 1948, the 'vendetta' system was waning dramatically but many Corsicans she met clung to century's old beliefs such as the concept of the extended family and the value of family 'honour'. Some villagers still lived in fear of the *mezzari* ('Dream hunters') and *the Eye* (the belief that certain people possessed the ability to cast a look that would portend death for the victim). And reverence was undiminished for the legendary *Bandits of Honour* who had, within living memory, escaped certain death via the vendetta system by living outside the law in the wild hills and forests of the island

Even if Corsica is now a wealthier place largely tamed by trade, tourism and mass popular culture, the dark undertones and ancient traditions are still strong and the island retains the same unspoilt, rugged beauty (the population is still no more than 330,000 in 2018 – much of it is unbridled wilderness). You can still get utterly lost in the dense *maquis*, wild forests and dramatic granite mountains. With Dorothy Carrington as your guide, it is worth knowing about all of this before you go!

There is plenty of history contained within, detailing the various occupations from the Barbarians of the middle ages to the Genoese (who ruled for 200 years and are largely responsible for the look of many Corsican towns) to the German forces in WWII (Corsica was the first French département to be liberated - a source of endless pride amongst its people). You will also learn a little about some of Corsica's national heroes, foremost amongst whom are Napoleon Bonaparte and Pascal Paoli (who has four towns in the USA named after him!). There is also a vivid eyewitness account of the *U Catenacciu*, the sinister religious procession featuring hooded penitents that takes place in the hill village of Sartene each Easter

If you enjoy knowing about the history and culture of your destination, this book is the very best primer for your visit to Corsica and, with the quality of its writing and insight, absolutely worthy of Penguin Classic status

Caroline says

I loved this book, beautifully written to make even politics readable. I knew very about Corsica when I started out, Rally location and something about Napoleon. Now I want to know more about how it has changed since the sixties, presumably they suffer the same issues as the rest of Europe. Maybe not. Have they retained their incredible sense of independence?

Loved it, loved it, loved it. Slow going in some places, the combination of travel journal and historical commentary needed more attention than the average light reading but all the better for that.

Elizabeth says

I wonderful book. This is among the best travel books that I have read: excellent writing, with a great deal of color and expression; a sense of the importance of history and culture, a wonderful instinct for finding and exploring the unusual, be it cultural, artistic or historic. The book satisfies on every level. A studious reader could use Carrington's itinerary to build a modern itinerary, and I think a comparison of her Corsica to the

Corsica of today would be a spectacular read. I started reading this book while in Corsica, but left off when I left. The area I saw was only the first 3 chapters of the book. Finishing it once I got home, my desire to return is stronger than ever. I hope you be the person who recreates her itinerary!

Briankiwi says

Skipped through this very lightly, but read enough to get the gist of the chapters I was most interested in, and to keep Corsica firmly planted in my travel plans--at which point a more detailed reading (and higher rating) is likely. Intriguing country!

Bill says

This book was really bucking for a fifth star by being head and shoulders above the other English-language books on Corsica. Still, the embarrassingly dated social theory that keeps popping up in the first half of the book, and the deeply grating fact that she never says what year it is on any of her trips, did impede my enjoyment.

Quibbles notwithstanding, this book has more and better history and social insight, both of the island and people as a whole and of particular villages and regions, than any other source.

Bronwen says

One of the classic travel/ethnographic stories of all times about an island that continues to delight and mystify

Sharmyn (Lumsden) Lilly says

the ultimate travel book -- gripping and inspiring. The author's travels through Corsica at the time were treacherous, dangerous and exciting, and what she reveals to the reader are extraordinary. I bought this book in a bookstore during a visit to Corsica, the Mediterranean mountain island, and devoured it. For women readers, I think you will find this book and the author inspiring and wonderful. Male readers probably will also, but women should not miss it!

Alison says

I was in Corsica recently and took this dated-looking travel book with me, expecting it to be a quaint diversion.

It is anything but quaint, it is a brilliant, witty, clever, astringent, hugely entertaining, highly informative and exquisitely coloured depiction of a wonderful destination, the Isle of Beauty: Corsica.

One of the best travel books of the 20th Century

Carol Peters says

fascinating

Katharine Mill says

This book was my companion on a recent trip to Corsica, and was everything I want from a travel guide that I can't get from a Google search (e.g. on '10 best beaches near Calvi', 'where to eat in Propriano', etc, and you don't need a book for that any more). Through history, anecdotes and personal observations, it gives a thorough context of the island and its people (up to 1971) by a writer who spent decades living there from the mid-20th century. Rather than read from start to finish, I dipped in and out using the excellent index, and so was able to read up on vendettas, Napoleon, British involvement, prehistoric sites, areas and towns we visited, and more. Recommended.

Alex says

beautifully written! loved it!

Vanessa Couchman says

If you want to go to Corsica, read this book first. I have lost count of the number of times I have read it and each time my knowledge of this fascinating, elusive island is enriched. Dorothy Carrington first visited Corsica shortly after World War II, when the island was already experiencing changes that would transform its centuries-old culture. She was bewitched by the island and became a renowned authority on its history and culture, living there for more than 50 years until her death in 2002.

The depth of her scholarship is breathtaking, interspersed with her personal experiences of travelling around Corsica, and I find myself constantly dipping into this book. The writing is luminous, witty, acerbic but intensely empathetic with the people she meets. Aspects are a little dated: she belonged to a prewar aristocracy that no longer exists and she regarded certain aspects of Corsica from that viewpoint. Nonetheless, she got to the heart of an island that is a part of Europe but has always remained a place apart.

I am an unapologetic Corsica freak and am eternally grateful to Dorothy Carrington's work in assisting my own work. Her personality rises from the pages of this book and I deeply regret that I never had the chance of meeting her.

But, oh Penguin, why did you have to issue this book in such a small typeface? It does not do justice to Dorothy Carrington's fine writing. It would be unfair to dock a star for it, since it's hardly her fault. But it does make this book difficult to read. If I have persevered, it's because I find her writing, scholarship and love of Corsica so infectious. It has done little for my eyesight...

El says

To get a real feel for the book itself (or even while reading this review), take a listen-sie to some Corsican chants. It's like a Corsican bouillon cube for your ears.

Dorothy Carrington first went to Corsica in 1948 in order to write a book about the island. Six years later she moved to Corsica and made it her home. This book came almost twenty years later, so she had time for her to get to know her shit before this was published. No outsider can really be a Corsican, but if anyone came close, it was probably her. She got to do some things that hadn't really been done yet/much, like visit the megalithic site Filitosa; it was partly because of her that archaeologists even went there and studied the statue-menhirs. The site wasn't handled as well as it should have (statues were removed, moved, broken in some cases, put back in what they *think* were the right places, etc.). Still, these megaliths predate the Easter Island statues or Stonehenge so the fact that they exist at all, in any sort of placement on the island, is incredibly impressive.

This is Carrington's magnum opus. She loved the island. She breathed the island. It's evident on every page here and, to a somewhat lesser degree, in *Dream Hunters of Corsica*. She makes me want to travel and write and immerse myself in a different culture, to know their history and, ultimately, to become a part of their history.

I'm a couple weeks away from embarking on my third trip to Corsica, and I couldn't be more effing excited. Though Carrington's book was published in 1971, I found a lot of similarities to things I saw, heard, or experienced in 2006 and again in 2008. I'm excited to see if anything has changed in the last four years, but imagine not - there's not much interest in or eagerness to change much on the island. The inhabitants are relatively happy with the way things are, and those that are unhappy will move to the mainland anyway. The island is a bit reclusive though people are hospitable, if perhaps a bit wary of strangers. In Bastia, which is our home base when we visit, we're practically royalty because everyone knows my boyfriend's grandmother (or one or more of her siblings), and it's really all about who you know there. It's truly a special place to visit.

Reading this now just makes me want to throw everything into a suitcase and jump on a plane. These next few weeks will be difficult, though I'm glad I read this book in anticipation of our trip. Gives me something to look forward to (as if I needed anything) and a few areas of history that will be worth talking to my boyfriend's grandmother about. I've already heard some of her stories but being a sucker for oral history I will never get sick of hearing more of them. Getting her to talk about some things, however, are rough as the memories are not pleasant to her.

I don't think one needs to have visited the island to have an appreciation of this book, though having some experience does add a bit pizzazz to it. This is exactly the sort of travel memoir I'm interested in and this one will have a permanent place on our shelves.
