

## U taffonu: the cave

(pronounced "ou tavonou", plural: taffoni)

The Corsican word "taffoni" is derived from the geological term that describes this strange phenomenon. At first glance, these rocks look like they have caved in underneath like rotten teeth. This doesn't happen by itself. A formidable team of four elements is responsible for this: the wind, carrying the ocean spray to the rocks, the rain pouring streams of salty water into the rocks' cracks, the sun, which crystallises the salt... and the salt itself, which splits the granite and pulls apart the grains of quartz, feldspars and mica. The long and patient process of taffonisation created the famous Roccapina lion, along with many other curiosities in Corsica.

## Roccapina lodge belonged to the workers



We know three of them: Dominique Peretti (1972-1914), Martin Cianfarani (1898-1957) and Charles Giaferi (1910-1990). The roadmen were responsible for maintaining the road between Pianottoli and Coralli: "It wasn't work, it was labour," explains Matthieu Cianfarani, who spent his childhood in Roccapina, where he would often help his father fill holes with stones. Isolated on the mountain slopes, the lodge served as a refuge for travellers, travelling merchants and transhumant shepherds, who could find food and drink and even a place to rest when they felt the need. The roadman's wife was the hostess.

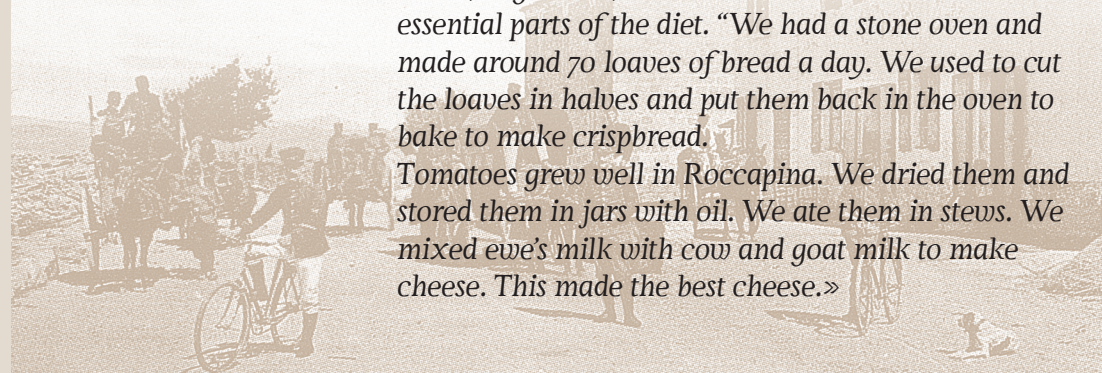
### The roadmen's children collected cyclamen

to sell to tourists on their way to see the lion. They made small bouquets in spring and autumn. There are actually two species of this beautiful flower in Roccapina: wavy-edged cyclamen (*Cyclamen repandum subsp repandum*), which flowers in April and May, and ivy-leaved cyclamen (*Cyclamen hederifolium*), which flowers in September and October.



### Roccapina shepherds

have also left their souvenirs: Ange-Baptiste Bacciochi born in 1918 remembers... «There were four sheepfolds in Roccapina: two high up and two lower down. There were four families with 21 people in total. There were 120 goats, 50 ewes, around 30 cows and three pigs, which could give birth to up to 50 piglets. They all belonged to one owner. Wheat, barley and oats were cultivated. Barley was for the pigs and the oats were fed to mules. We harvested the dry wheat with pruning knives and spread it out on the parched earth to make an area. We used a square rock pulled by cattle for threshing and then a smooth, round stone. We didn't have a flail." Bread, vegetables, cheese and charcuterie were essential parts of the diet. "We had a stone oven and made around 70 loaves of bread a day. We used to cut the loaves in halves and put them back in the oven to bake to make crispbread. Tomatoes grew well in Roccapina. We dried them and stored them in jars with oil. We ate them in stews. We mixed ewe's milk with cow and goat milk to make cheese. This made the best cheese.»



## The oriu: the converted taffonu

(pronounced "orioo", plural: orii)

Humans quickly noticed the benefits of the many natural shelters created by taffonisation. Since prehistoric times, taffoni have been converted and enclosed using simple branches or dry stone walls. They had multiple uses and became dwellings, tombs and animal enclosures. In the 19th century, the taffonu was transformed into oriu. Sealed with walls and fitted with a door and sometimes windows, they became sheepfolds or temporary shelters with a hearth and furnishings. A number of orii lie hidden in the Corsican shrubland. The Roccapina orii are easier to find along the Roccapina oriu trail and were restored by the Conservatoire du Littoral.

Land and marine sites protected by the Conservatoire du Littoral in Corsica



### The Departmental Council of Corse-du-Sud

manages the sites protected by the Conservatoire with the help of coastline guardians. It also manages the museums of Lèvie, Sartène and A casa di Roccapina as part of its mission to help promote local heritage.

### The Conservatoire du Littoral

currently protects 340,000 acres and around 745 miles of coastline in France. The trust owns the old roadman's lodge as well as 1,235 acres of land in Roccapina. It has also successfully completed discovery trails, works of architecture and museographic improvements at A casa di Roccapina.



## A CASA DI ROCCAPINA

Roccapina mountain lodge

### TAFFONI E ORII The mysterious world of rocks in Roccapina



### A lion, an elephant and other shrubland beasts...

Roccapina is an archipelago of bleached rocks jutting out from a sea of vegetation that rolls over the mountains. A number of islands rise above the bushy waves, populated by unexpected animals: a lion here, an elephant there... Further away, for those who know what to look for, there is a toucan, a rhinoceros and a camel. These are the strange maquis shrublands of Roccapina, where exotic animals emerge from clumps of arbutus and alpine tree heather.

Windswept, weathered by the ocean, scorched by the sun and eroded by the salt of the Mediterranean, Roccapina's rocks have gradually taken shape. The lion, elephant and other fantastical creatures are the result of this constant battle with the elements and nature's merciless embrace.

Between the sea and the mountains, a mysterious stone lion watches over ROCCAPINA

A phantasmagoric landscape is revealed before our disbelieving eyes; an improbable world bought to life by copious legends.

The granite caves behind the large lion of Roccapina conceal many stories. Pick up an audioguide at the entrance to the lodge: "I am the lion's daughter. I know all of his secrets, all of his mysteries." This is Jane. Through her, Roccapina tells its tale... Listen to Jane as she tells the stories of roadmen, shepherds, farmers and coal merchants, shipwrecked boats and buried treasure. Listen! You're about to discover a world where history is marked by legends, where primitive man meets the Corsican gangster, where bears emerge from the rocks and warlords are turned to stone. Taffoni are carved out of granite and turned into orii... Listen as Jane's voice describes it all.



Conservatoire du littoral



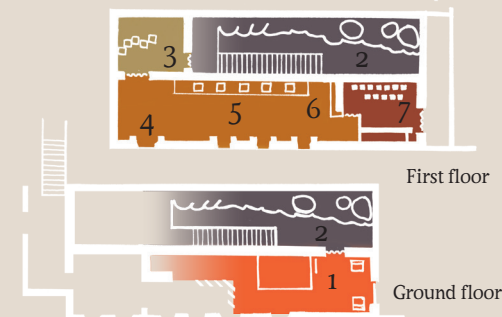
CORSE DU SUD  
Le Département

A coastal conservation site managed by the Departmental Council of Corse-du-Sud



## A casa di Roccapina

The old roadman's house of Roccapina



### Section 1

The presence of those who have passed through or stayed in Roccapina surrounds the large-scale model of the site: transhumant shepherds and merchants, roadmen and border guards, coal merchants and tourists.

### Section 2

A plunge into the fantastical world of petrified animals in Roccapina... See the lion wake up from its stony sleep!

### Section 3

The science behind Roccapina: models, sculptures and photos explain the geological phenomenon of taffonisation in 5 stages.

### Section 4

Four windows offer four views of Roccapina, its legends, pirates and shipwrecks.

### Section 5

Five models accompanied by photographs show the five different uses of oriu in Corsica: pre-historic dwellings, tombs, defensive structures, sheepfolds and shelters...

### Section 6

Here is a collection of Jane's little treasures, which represent the heart and soul of Roccapina: engravings and postcards, labels, books and bits of charcoal and coral.

### Section 7

Jane's cinema: The film *Amour et Vendetta ou la fille du lion* (Love and Vendetta, The Lion's Daughter) is showing, a drama about the history of the maquis shrubland made in 1923.

The taffonu underneath the old mountain roadman's house was a pigsty. Opposite, close to a small fountain, was the border guard's vegetable garden.

The film *Amour et Vendetta* ou la fille du lion (Love and Vendetta, The Lion's Daughter) is a silent black and white movie that was filmed in Roccapina. It was directed by René Norbert and starred the actors Jane Duverger, Liane de Beauvais, Gaston Norès, Jean Sarté, Luc Dartagnan and José Dayert. Discovered in a cave at Sartène in 1981, the film was restored in 1992 on the initiative of the Corsican film institute A Casa di Lume.

## The oriu trail,

*u caminu di l'oriu*, is part of the museum visit at A casa di Roccapina. The short walk takes 20 minutes with an audioguide and allows you to set foot in the astonishing world of the taffoni. Here you can stroke the stones and imagine you are a shepherd in an oriu shelter.

Oriu rock shelter

Terrace where the vein in the granite points to the tower and the lion

The kennel taffonu

The henhouse taffonu

Entrance

RN 196

Start of the lookout trail

The ewes' enclosure has been restored.

Viewed close up, the elephant is unrecognisable...

A sheepfold is sheltered underneath the elephant: the shepherd would sleep there close to his animals on a small ledge higher up.

## The maquis shrublands of Roccapina, a macchja di Roccapina

The maquis is a green ocean, an insurmountable mass. Its impenetrability is more than just a myth: only lizards and wild boar can make their way through the inextricable tangle of myrtle, mastic trees, cistus and other sarsaparilla. You would have to be mad to risk crossing the thorny mass of vegetation known as spiny broom (*calicotome villosa*), too. So how can you discover the treasures of Roccapina in these conditions?

It has taken years of patient and painstaking work by coastal guardians to open trails through this tangled landscape... and to rediscover the taffoni, oriu and low walls buried beneath the vegetation as well as other traces left behind by people who have lived in the lion's shadow. When you reach the bottom of the stairs to the car park, the change of scene is extraordinary: along Roccapina's trails, you become absorbed by the incredibly dense and hectic surroundings. The horizon disappears and you lose all sense of direction... Let the walk guide you until you suddenly emerge on a rocky island. Stop and gaze at the green waves of Roccapina's maquis until they crash into the sea.

## The lookout trail

*u caminu di a punta*, is open access. It plunges you into the heart of the maquis shrubland... but it's impossible to get lost. Simply follow the path in either direction. It takes 45 minutes to walk down to the roadman's lodge and discover the wonders that have long been buried under the vegetation and recently unearthed.

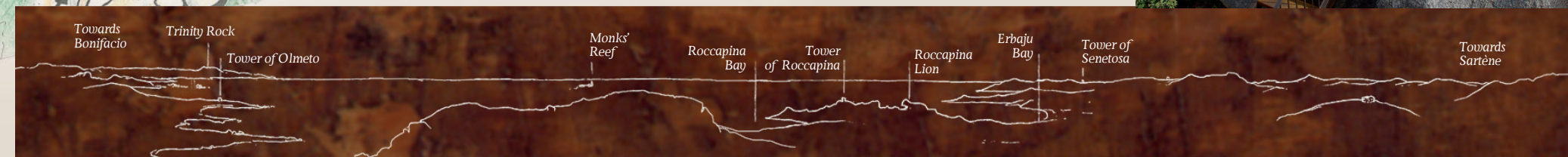
Close by are the ruins of Italian barracks from the Second World War. Matthieu Cianfarani, a roadman's son who was born in 1924, tells us: «During the Second World War, there were perhaps 1000 Italian soldiers between Murtoli and Roccapina. The French had converted a walled cave at the lookout post for defence. When the Italians took over, they built small houses covered with planks. The Italian Communist Party established a base there and the commander reserved a room at the roadman's lodge. The Italians were our enemies but Grandmother said: «Oh, they're just 22 year old boys! » ... So they ate with us. »

The terrace and the stairs take you out onto the shrublands.

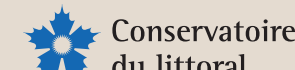
The viewpoint on the terrace allows you to look out at the horizon: the Monks' Reef and the lighthouse in the foreground remind you of the famous shipwrecks along the coast. Nearby Sardinia is also visible in the distance.

To the East lies the Ermitage de la Trinité Rock that stands at the gates of Bonifacio.

To the West lies the lion guarding the shores from his tower.



Renovation of A casa di roccapina was funded by :



Textes : Cécile Auréjac - Illustrations : Alain Freytet - Maîtrise d'œuvre muséographique : Mille lieux sur la terre