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Pope Francis listens to a young person during a meeting with university students at the Catholic University of Portugal Aug. 3, 2023 in Lisbon. (CNS/Vatican Media)



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Pope Francis will become the first pope to visit Corsica, the birthplace of Napoleon Bonaparte, when he makes a daytrip to the French island Dec. 15.

The pope will make the roughly one-hour flight from Rome to Ajaccio, Corsica's capital, to participate in a conference on popular religiosity in the Mediterranean region organized by the Diocese of Ajaccio, which encompasses the entire island.

During his nine hours in Corsica, the pope will also meet with the local religious community, celebrate a public Mass and meet with French President Emmanuel Macron, the Vatican said when it announced the trip Nov. 23.

The conference, which gathers theological experts and religious leaders from the Mediterranean region, will feature talks on evangelization through popular traditions, popular religiosity and secularism, the role of Catholic confraternities and the realities of popular religiosity in various geographic contexts.

Francis has championed popular piety since the start of his pontificate, writing in his 2013 exhortation, "Evangelii Gaudium" ("The Joy of the Gospel") that popular piety is "a true expression of the spontaneous missionary activity of the people of God."

That sentiment, coupled with the pope's affinity for Cardinal François-Xavier Bustillo of Ajaccio, to whom he gave a red hat in 2023, could explain his reasoning for the visit. In 2022, Francis gave priests copies of then-Bishop Bustillo's book, "Witnesses, Not Officials," at chrism Mass on Holy Thursday. The following year, the pope made him a cardinal.

The trip will mark the third time Francis travels to France, following visits to Strasbourg in 2014 to address the European Parliament and to Marseille in 2023 for a meeting of Mediterranean bishops.

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According to the "Annuario Pontificio," a Vatican yearbook, about 81% of Corsica's almost 344,000 inhabitants are Catholic.

Here is the detailed schedule of the pope's trip released by the Vatican Nov. 23. Times listed are local, with Eastern Standard Time in parenthesis.

Sunday, Dec. 15 (Rome, Ajaccio)

— 7:45 a.m. (1:45 a.m.) Departure from Rome's Fiumicino airport.

— 9 a.m. (3 a.m.) Arrival at Ajaccio International Airport and official welcome.

— 10:15 a.m. (4:15 a.m.) Closing session of "Popular Religiosity in the Mediterranean" conference at the Ajaccio Convention and Exhibition Center. Speech by pope.

— 11:20 a.m. (5:20 a.m.) Recitation of the Angelus prayer with bishops, priests, deacons, consecrated persons, and seminarians at the Cathedral of Our Lady of the Assumption. Speech by pope.

— 3:30 p.m. (9:30 a.m.) Mass at Place d’Austerlitz. Homily by pope.

— 5:30 p.m. (11:30 a.m.) Meeting with French President Emmanuel Macron at Ajaccio International Airport.

— 6 p.m. (Noon) Farewell ceremony at Ajaccio International Airport.

— 6:15 p.m. (12:15 p.m.) Departure from Ajaccio International Airport.

— 7:05 p.m. (1:05 p.m.) Arrival at Rome's Fiumicino airport.