

**FRANCE**

**SPRINGFIELD**

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**ELBA**



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*July 24-26*

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# Background Note

The jewel of the Tuscan archipelago--the island of Elba is 138 miles square and has 30,000 inhabitants. For those who wish to stay there, it is only a short distance from the big cities of Florence and Rome.

Elba is noted mainly for its iron, wines, and a brief interlude of Napoleonic history. It has long been known as the "soot island" because the inhabitants have been mining and smelting iron since ancient times. Despite its rocky terrain, parts of the island are fertile, and the cultivation of grapes for production of local wine is an important industry. Many people of the coastal towns, as can be expected, are engaged in tunny and sardine fishing.

Portoferraio, the capital and principal town of Elba with a population of over 10,000 has the best harbor on the island. The city is enclosed in a mountain amphitheater, the slopes of which are covered with farms and villas, replete with their vineyards and gardens.

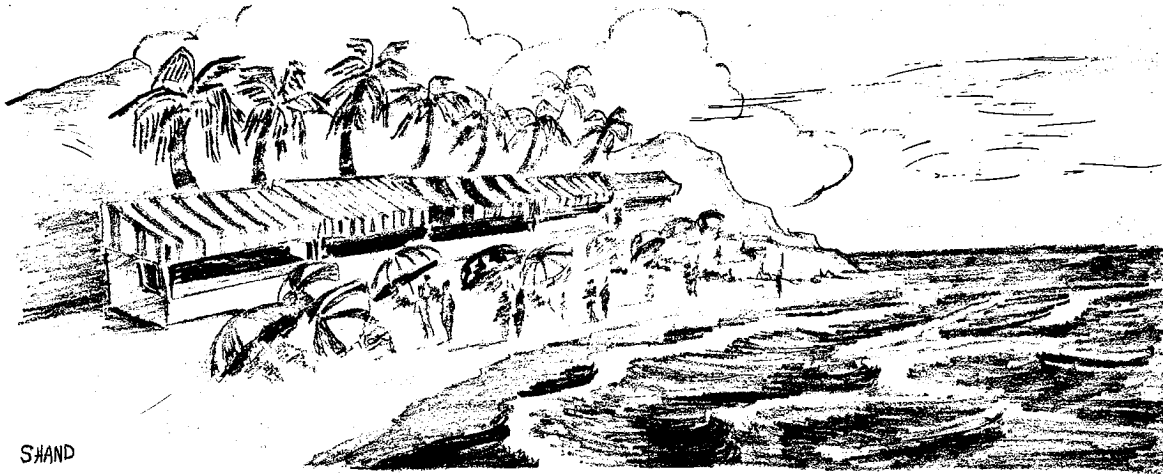
## History

In 453 B.C., Elba was devastated by a Syracusan squadron. From the 11th to the 14th century it belonged to Pisa and in 1399 came under the Dukes of Piombino. In 1548 it was ceded by them to Cosimo I of Florence. In 1596 Porto Longone was taken by Philip III of Spain and retained until 1709 when it was ceded to Naples. In 1802 the island was given to France, and twelve years later it was all of Napoleon's empire that the Allies permitted him to retain after his abdication. Here Napoleon lived with full sovereign rights as Emperor of Elba from May 1814 until February 1815 when he returned to France, landing at Golfe Juan for the Hundred Days that led to Waterloo. Villa San Martino, his official residence in Portoferraio, is situated between

two forests overlooking the sea. Some four miles to the southwest of the town in an attractive valley stands his country home. After Napoleon's fall the island was restored to Tuscany and with it became part of united Italy in 1860.



Before World War II, nearly a third of Elba's population of about 30,000 lived in the northwestern part of the island around Portoferraio and earned a living from the iron smelting and cement plants there. During World War II the plants were badly damaged by Allied bombing and are now in a poor state of repair. There appears to be no prospect of reopening them. This has meant unemployment for a large percentage of Portoferraio's inhabitants and has imposed a severe economic strain which helps account for the strong Communist influence upon the island. The remainder of the people live in half a dozen coastal communities and fish or farm for a livelihood. Tourism will doubtless become the most important industry on the island. Thanks to the encouragement and promotion provided by the government Elba is annually attracting more and more vacationers.



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**Beaches:** There are many beaches on the island. It is recommended that swimming parties be encouraged. Most of the beaches near Portoferraio are stony. An excellent sand beach is found 10 miles southwest at Marino di Campo, on the southern coast of the island. The beach has plenty of open space. Public transportation is available, and on notice the bus company can probably provide additional capacity. Hotels and restaurants are available in the town as well as on the beach. Beaches in Portoferraio include one located adjacent to the athletic field in the northwest part of town, and another in front of the Villa Tosconelli. Although the latter is private, the owners do not object to parties of about 20 men.

**Clubs and Bars:** There are no night clubs, but one of the beach pavilions has dancing occasionally. The town closes down at 2300. The local bars and cafes are generally small, and with one or two exceptions, are not especially attractive. Local wine is good, plentiful and inexpensive.



Steamers run from Portoferraio three times a day the 15 miles by water to Portoferraio. Elba is still an almost unspoiled paradise, where prices are low and the visitor in some sections is still a curiosity. Wonderful camping sites in the pines; isolated beaches you can call entirely your own; and a round-the-island drive by car or bus that takes you from tremendous scenery along the edge of high seaside cliffs to tiny coastal towns where the sweet white wine of Elba (quite potent) comes cold and sparkling at restaurants and roadside inns.

The ever-improving accommodation for visitors, its fine roads, and well-organized public services make a holiday spent here both pleasant and restful.

The island's average temperature is 60 F. varying between a minimum of 33 and a maximum of 88. In January its average is 49 (minimum 35, maximum 60); in July it averages 76 (minimum 63, maximum 86). In winter the mean temperature is 48, in spring 57, in summer 73, and in autumn 62.

Interesting records of Napoleon's exile (1814-15) on this historic island are to be found in the Palazzina dei Mulini, in the Villa at San Martino, in the old church at Portoferraio, in Marciana (Madonna del Monte) and in other localities.

Hotels: The better hotels in the Portoferraio area are as follows:

G.H. Darsena - Portoferraio; roof garden, bar  
Bonaparte Palace - Portoferraio  
Fonte Napoleone - Poggio Terme, 14 m. west of Portoferraio  
Del Golfo - Procchio, seven miles w. of Portoferraio  
Capo Sud - Lacona, nine miles south  
La Primula - Marciana Marina, 11 miles west  
Albergo Ape Elbana - Portoferraio  
Belmare - Porto Azzurro, 10 miles S.E.  
Iselba - Marino di Campo

Restaurants: The following restaurants are recommended:

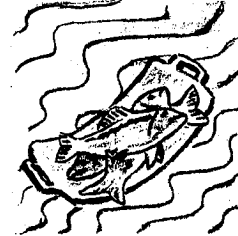
Zi Rosa - view of port  
Le Ghiaie e la Falconetta  
La Lanterna - Porto Azzurro  
Darsena Hotel Restaurant - dock area  
Albergo Ape Elbana - main square  
Hermitage - Biodola  
Marinella - Marciana Marina  
Da Mauro - Marciana Marina  
Del Golfo Hotel - Marciana Marina



Athletics: A soccer field, large enough for softball, is located on the northwest side of town. Arrangements for its use may be made through the Captain of the Port or a Mr. Bertes, who operates a sporting goods store near the steamer landing and speaks fluent English. He can also arrange for the use of a private tennis court outside of town. There is a basketball court and a swimming pool at the local Naval School. Locker and shower facilities are available at the school. The Italian Navy can furnish boats for sailing.

Churches: There are three Roman Catholic churches in Portoferraio. The main one is located at the eastern end of the square. There are no Protestant churches.

Transportation: Local transportation consists of taxis, horse-drawn carriages and a good interurban bus system. Some taxis and carriages are available for hire to tour the island. Buses for sightseeing can be hired from the Lorenzi Bus Company, opposite the marine railway in the southeast end of town. Three steamers daily depart for Piombino, on the mainland of Italy. The trip takes an hour and twenty minutes and costs about 50 cents.



Theater and Cinema: The town has one cinema, located on Via Garibaldi. The chances that American films are shown with English soundtrack are remote.

Shopping: No information

Tours: No fixed tours are available. Buses for sightseeing and tours of the island may be chartered for about \$40.00 per day, including driver. Buses accommodate 28 persons and flexible tour itineraries can be arranged.

The principal tourist site of Elba is Napoleon's villa, located four miles southwest of Portoferraio at San Martino. This, his town house, and their associated museums, are open to the public. The drive along the north coastal shore of the island provides many striking views of the sea. Beyond Marciana the road climbs to the picturesque mountainside town of Poggio Terme. Hikes may be made to an old fort atop Mount Volterraio, near Portoferraio. The view from Capoliveri, 10 miles southeast, is good.

The hospitality of the inhabitants of the eight communes of Portoferraio, Campo Elba, Capoliveri, Marciana, Marciana Marina, Port Azzurro, Rio Marina, Rio nell'Elba, its excellent wines, its fresh fish, its clear air and sparkling blue Tyrrhenian Sea justify this old saying:

"From the flowering of the bud--To the falling of the leaf--In the enchantment of Elba..."

