



The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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ARABIAN ODYSSEY

Come with us to a corner of the world that has fascinated travellers for centuries. Our cruise aboard the all-suite MS Island Sky offers a comprehensive look at an area richly influenced by its ancient history and recent wealth. The diverse nature of the people, customs and the landscapes they inhabit, make for an enthralling experience as we venture through the mosaic of lands bordered by vast deserts, through green wadis and pass in the shadow of spectacular mountains. The contrast of old and new is staggering, from the ancient villages and souks of the old towns to the magnificent cities of glass and steel, which include some of the worlds most impressive, modern buildings. All this will be achieved with great ease aboard the MS Island Sky, an ideal vessel for serious exploration. With just 100 or so like-minded souls, we are able to explore in a way that is impossible from aboard a large cruise vessel. The shimmering waters of the Gulf should make for a comfortable journey with pleasant temperatures and the obvious bonus of having a ship for our base, rather than a sequence of hotels, leaves us free to relax and enjoy all the marvellous sights that surround us. The itinerary has been planned in great detail and the cruise includes all shore excursions. Joining you onboard will be our Guest Speaker who will add much to your experience and knowledge of the region. We will combine visits to old mosques, archaeological sites, timeless forts and citadels with modern city centres such as Abu Dhabi and Dubai. An overnight call to Muscat gives plenty of time to explore fascinating Oman. For those looking for something a little different this trip offers a wonderful opportunity to explore in some depth an area which in the main has been thankfully neglected by the world of mass

tourism.

ITINERARY

Day 1 - London to Salalah, Oman.

Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

Day 2 - Salalah.

Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Island Sky. The remainder of the day will be at leisure. Moor overnight.

Day 3 - Salalah.

Benefitting from the Indian summer monsoon, Salalah, Omans second city in the Southern Omani region of Dhofar is a surprisingly lush corner of the Arabian Peninsula which has long been associated with frankincense. Ancient cities such as Samahran were trading throughout Arabia over 3000 years ago from the ports of the region. Today as we explore the region we will see the trees which grow in the wadis around Salalah and we will drive out of Salalah towards the north and the isolated Nabi Ayoub, Prophet Jobs tomb, which is located high in the mountains offering wonderful views towards the plains below. Returning to the coast to the west of Salalah we will see the blowholes at Mughsail Beach and drive the Sarfait Road, a wonderful feat of engineering which climbs 1000 metres with a series of hairpin turns. From the wadi at the top we will have views over the coast and into the interior. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and this afternoon spend time in Salalah.

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See the Shanfari Mosque with its exquisite artwork and stained tiles and the Al Husn Souq where we can purchase frankincense crystals and typical Dhofari frankincense burners. We will also visit the Al Baleed museum which showcases the cities prosperous past before sailing in the evening.

Day 4 - At sea.

Enjoy a relaxing day at sea as we continue our journey around the Omani coast.

Day 5 - Masirah Island.

Spend the morning on Masirah Island located 15 kilometres from the Omani coast. Whilst close to the mainland, it still offers a desert island experience with little development and limited on shore facilities. The main draw to the island is the resident wildlife with four species of turtle laying eggs on the island over the course of the year. Meanwhile over 300 species of birds are found in the mudflats, beaches and offshore islets including flamingos whilst gazelles graze in the interior and the surrounding waters are home to dolphins and whales. After landing by ships Zodiac, we will enjoy an island drive before returning to the ship for lunch and an afternoon cruising.

Days 6 & 7 - Muscat, Oman.

We will enjoy two days in and around the capital city of Muscat during which time there will be a number of guided excursions. The city tour of Muscat will include the Grand Mosque, Muttrah Souk and the fascinating Bait al Zubair Museum situated in a converted townhouse which exhibits Omani Heritage with photos and traditional handicrafts and furniture. We also pass the Sultans Palace Al Alam which is flanked by two 16th century Portuguese forts. On a full day excursion we will drive inland through fascinating scenery to see some of the most impressive

forts in Oman starting at the sultanate of Nizwa, Omans ancient capital where we find the 17th century fort which has a unique 40 metre tall round tower. We will continue to Jabrin Castle built in 1675 as a centre of learning for astrology, medicine and Islamic Law before continuing to Bahla. Bahla is renowned for being one of the most comprehensive walled cities in the world and part of these battlements include the impressive 12th century fort. Alternatively, for the more adventurous there will be an optional overnight excursion to the Wahiba Sands. We take the coastal route visiting the fishing village of Quriyat and picturesque Wadi Arabayeen before heading to the vast mass of undulating red and white sands with dunes rising up to 200 metres. Home to the nomadic Bedu people we will be welcomed into their homes and learn about their way of life. We will then spend the night in a camp in the desert enjoying a typical dinner. On our return journey to Muscat we will drive through Wadi Bani Khalid, a collection of plantations and villages embedded in the mountains and fed by a natural spring which feeds the abundant vegetation.

Day 8 - Khor Fakkan & Fujairah, UAE.

After a morning at sea we arrive into Khor Fakkan at lunchtime. This afternoon we will drive north from the port of Khor Fakkan to see the Al Badiya Mosque. This modest structure dates back to 1446 and is believed to be the oldest mosque in the UAE. We will continue to Fujairah, the largest town on the east coast and a business and commercial hub. We will visit the museum containing archaeological finds from Bidya, Bithnah and Qidfa including vessels and arrowheads proving life has been here for over 3500 years. Meanwhile the 16th century fort is draped on a rocky outcrop overlooking Fujairahs old village. After a chance to explore the local fruit, fish and vegetable market we will return to the ship.

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Day 9 - Musandam Peninsula, Oman.

Awake this morning in Khasab, our base for our day in the beautiful Musandam Peninsula, often referred to as the Norway of Arabia. This is without doubt the most dramatic of all mountainous locations in the Gulf and a difficult region to visit other than by sea. Here, Bedouin boatmen will take us upon their dhow to explore the spectacular arid, fjord-like landscapes. Here we hope to see cormorants and terns that inhabit the cliffs, whilst if we are lucky dolphins may accompany us on the journey.

Day 10 - Sharjah, UAE.

Sharjah is renowned for its elegant mosques and museums and tagged as the cultural capital of the UAE. On a morning excursion we will pass by the University of Sharjah before exploring the Museum of Islamic civilisation. Here in a converted souk we will explore 1400 years of Islamic art and artefacts with ceramics, armour, woodwork and jewellery on display. Meanwhile the galleries display different aspects of the Five Pillars of Islam. We will return to the MS Island Sky via the Blue Souk. This afternoon is free to either relax onboard or return to Sharjah where you may wish to visit the Maritime or Archaeological Museums, the souks or walk in the Heritage area with its historic buildings.

Day 11 - Abu Dhabi, UAE.

Arrive this morning for a full day in the capital of the United Arab Emirates. Choose from a morning tour where we will discover the remarkable Sheikh Zayed Grand mosque. With 80 marble domes held aloft with 1000 pillars and punctuated by four 107 metre high minarets, this snow white mosque is an impressive site. We continue to the Heritage Village where we can have a glimpse of life in the pre-oil days, see craftsmen at work and displays of

Bedouin jewellery and clothing. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a free afternoon to explore further. Alternatively join a full day excursion to the Oasis city of Al Ain, the birthplace of Sheikh Zayed with its markets, forts, museums and a famous date palm oasis. We will see the Al Ain Palace Museum which was Sheikh Zayed's residence from 1937 to 1966, explore the courtyards and see the rooms where he received guests. Also discover the archaeological park, the ancient irrigation systems and walk in the water green oasis. We end at the chaotic camel market, an immersion into traditional Arabic culture before returning to our ship.

Day 12 - Dubai, UAE.

Today we arrive in bustling modern Dubai. However on a morning tour we will explore the historical districts with time in the Al Fahidi Historical neighbourhood where we walk the labyrinthine lanes lined with century old buildings built by textile and pearl merchants. Today the area is a haven for artists with small galleries and shops. We will then take a local abra water taxi across the creek to Beira where we will explore the lanes of the spice and gold souqs selling everything from frankincense and chillies to all kinds of jewellery imaginable. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon is at leisure for you to explore at your own pace. Maybe visit the Burj Khalifa, the worlds tallest building, the Jumeirah Mosque or one of the cities excellent museums.

Day 13 - Dubai to London.

Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. Arrive this evening.

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YOUR SHIP: ISLAND SKY

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

With a maximum passenger capacity of only 116, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Island Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers- the friendly crew of 75 crew and Scandinavian captains are experienced mariners, having been in service aboard large 2000 plus passenger vessels and who now prefer a less frantic life aboard a small ship. If, like them and us, you prefer a more peaceful life at sea, you will find the MS Island Sky the perfect ship. When choosing the vessel for your next voyage of discovery, you can select a ship with endless entertainment and impersonal service or come with us where peace, high quality service and attention to detail are the order of the day. We promise there will be no organised entertainment, fancy dress, deck games or any of the usual big ship experiences. The atmosphere on board is more akin to a private yacht or country hotel. A little music in the lounge or bar after dinner, guest speakers, informative port briefings from our cruise director and of course good food which may be enjoyed leisurely in the attractive dining room. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well run and exceedingly

comfortable ship. Your Suite Onboard there are 57 exceptionally spacious and well designed suites. All feature a sitting room area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views. Each affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring marble-topped vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television with inbuilt DVD player which can also play CDs and a telephone in each suite. Bottled water, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. The suites on each deck have their own colour theme. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be. Your Space The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large lounge where daily briefings and talks will be provided throughout the voyage and an elegant bar where a pianist plays periodically throughout the day. The bar also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. The onboard library is the perfect place to relax with a book and is stocked with reference books pertaining to the places the vessel is visiting along with a selection of games and two computers with internet access. Daily newspapers and magazines are also placed in the library depending on local availability. There is

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also WI-FI access throughout the vessel. Outside there is a rear sun deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade, a bar and comfortable deck furniture for sun bathing or relaxing with a book. On the top deck there is a Jacuzzi and further observation and sun deck. There is also a small hairdressers on board with appointments made on request. Your Dining Another benefit of a small ship is the quality of the cuisine. With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the galley is able to provide delicious meals. Where possible and when it meets his high standards, the chef will obtain local produce in markets or buy the catch of the day from a passing fishing boat. Such purchases enhance the well stocked larders and bring a local touch to the



varied menus.

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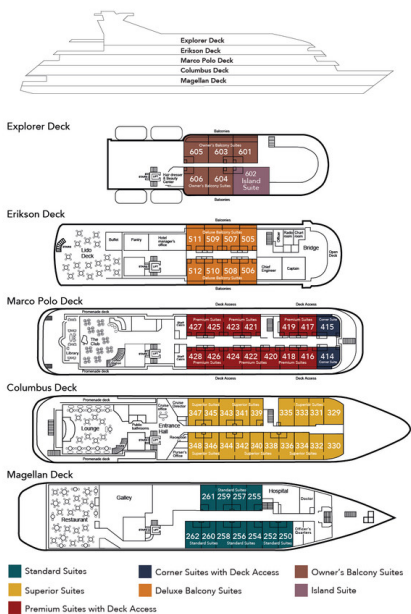
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