



The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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BRITAIN & IRELAND IN BLOOM (SERENISSIMA)

During the month of June our western shores and Ireland are alive with colour. This is a spectacularly beautiful time when many of the gardens, estates and national parks are at their most appealing and the countryside will be lush and inviting. The gardens of Britain and Ireland have a unique quality and from the formal and manicured, to the wilder and more natural, our itinerary includes some of the most beautiful and diverse gardens which in early summer are a sight to gladden any heart. High on our list are the stunning sub-tropical Abbey Gardens on Tresco; Bodnant Garden in the beautiful Conway Valley; Inverewe Gardens, Scotland's botanical gardens in the north-west Highlands; and some delightful Irish gardens which have a unique quality, the 'soft' weather and green mountain backdrops making for lovely views. Each day there will also be the opportunity to experience the sheer diversity of the coastline, see the resident wildlife, enjoy the wonderful views on offer and appreciate the history of the region. All of this makes for a most appealing sea journey whether you be an avid gardener, birdwatcher or simply enjoy sailing past and visiting some of the most enchanting places in the world. Whilst you could always drive, travel by train and coach and reach most of our itinerary with the help of a ferry, it is much more enjoyable to join the 95 passenger MS Serenissima and travel in comfort accompanied by our expert onboard team without any of the hassle that independent exploration of these fascinating places would entail.



ITINERARY



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Day 1 - Portsmouth, England.

Embark this afternoon. A transfer will be provided from Portsmouth Harbour station to the port at a set time. Enjoy a welcome dinner on board this evening as we set sail.

Day 2 - Tresco, Isles of Scilly.

Spend the morning at sea arriving in the Isles of Scilly over lunch. We spend the afternoon on traffic-free Tresco, walking its idyllic lanes from the beach to the famous sub-tropical Abbey Gardens. Defying the Atlantic weather, this miracle of a garden is home to more than 20,000 species of plants from over 80 countries. Enjoy time to wander at your own pace along the paths, maybe visit the Valhalla collection of ship figureheads from ships wrecked on the islands or relax in the cafe.

Day 3 - Waterford - Ireland

From our berth in the town of Waterford we will drive to Mount Congreve, a spectacular woodland garden on the banks of the River Suir. This privately owned seventy acre garden has a collection of over three thousand trees and shrubs and is particularly stunning in early summer when the gardens are awash with magnificent sweeps of flowering azaleas, camellias, magnolias and rhododendrons. Enjoy time to walk the numerous paths bordered with wisterias or bluebells and visit the vantage points with views over the landscape and meadows beyond. Return to the MS Serenissima for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at leisure to explore Waterford independently.

Day 4 - Dun Laoghaire.

After breakfast we will drive out into the Wicklow Mountains and the wonderfully sited gardens of Powerscourt. Spread out over 47 acres we will explore the Italianate Terraces, the Japanese Garden where the azaleas should be in bloom and maybe take a walk through the wooded Tower Valley. We will enjoy lunch before continuing to Mount Usher, a lovely romantic garden on the banks of the River Vartry with over 5,000 species of plants and shrubs. We hope to see magnolias and crocuses line the pathways as we stroll through the grounds. Alternatively, you may prefer to spend the day in Dublin and our onboard staff will be able to advise on travel arrangements to the city centre.

Day 5 - Llandudno & Bodnant Gardens, Wales.

Spend the morning at Bodnant Garden, which is situated above the River Conwy and has stunning views across Snowdonia. Begun in 1875, Bodnant Garden is the creation of four generations of Aberconways and features huge Italianate terraces and formal lawns on its upper level, with a wooded valley, stream and wild garden below. There are dramatic colours throughout the season, with herbaceous borders, roses, hydrangeas, water lilies and clematis that delight throughout the summer. This afternoon will be free to explore Llandudno at leisure. Developed as an upmarket holiday town for Victorian visitors, this seaside town still retains much of its 19th century grandeur, with graceful wedding-cake architecture lining its sweeping waterfront promenade.



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Day 6 - Belfast

This morning we will make our way to the famous gardens at Mount Stewart which were planted in the 1920s by Edith, Lady Londonderry and are of international importance. The magnificent series of outdoor 'rooms' and vibrant parterres contain many rare plants that thrive in the mild climate of the Ards Peninsula. The formal areas exude a strong Mediterranean feel and resemble an Italian villa landscape; the wooded areas support a range of plants from all corners of the world. There will be time to explore the opulent house which reveals a fascinating heritage and historic world-famous artefacts and artwork. Do not leave without taking in the magnificent views of Strangford Lough from Temple of the Winds. Return to the ship for lunch and the afternoon is free to relax on board, explore the city of Belfast at your own pace or maybe take an independent visit the Titanic Experience. Located by the site of the ship's construction, this museum tells the story of the Titanic from her conception through her construction and launch in 1911.

Day 7 - Arduaine & Crarae Gardens, Scotland.

Sail this morning along the Argyll coast to our anchorage at Ardfarn. From here we will visit two very special National Trust for Scotland gardens. First stop is Arduaine Garden, a delightful woodland garden which enjoys the benefits from the warming effect of the North Atlantic Drift and is a paradise for plant lovers. Take a walk through the woodland to the coastal viewpoint and enjoy superb views of the Sound of Jura or just spend some time relaxing at the water garden. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon drive to Crarae Gardens,

created in 1912 by Lady Grace Campbell the aunt of intrepid plant hunter Reginald Farrer, who sourced trees and shrubs from China, Nepal and Tibet. Today it is a Himalayan style glen set in the gentle hills of Argyll.

Day 8 - Shiant Islands & Inverewe Gardens.

This morning we will board the Zodiacs for a cruise around the spectacular basalt cliffs of the Shiant Islands, an excellent place to spot puffins, razorbills, guillemots and seal. Sailing into Loch Ewe we will use our Zodiacs to visit Inverewe, surely one of the finest sited gardens in all Scotland. Cared for by the National Trust for Scotland since 1952, it was first designed by plant hunter Osgood Mackenzie in the late 19th century and is home to a multitude of exotic and tender plants that are sheltered by well positioned windbreaks of native pine. After a guided tour of the gardens, we will return to the ship and sail this evening.

Day 9 - Scrabster

Arrive today in Scrabster, the most northerly port on the Scottish mainland. This morning we will visit the Castle and Gardens of Mey, built between 1566 and 1572 by George Sinclair, 4th Earl of Caithness. The castle was purchased by Queen Elizabeth, the Queen Mother, in 1952, who renovated and restored it and created the beautiful gardens which we will see today. After lunch on board relax for the afternoon or choose to take a drive along the coast to Dunnet Bay, a glorious crescent of sand and dunes and home to many seabirds and unusual flora that we will discover on a guided walk with the local ranger. We continue to Dunnet Head to see the lighthouse, built in 1831 by Robert



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Stevenson, and enjoy the views over to Orkney. Before our return to the ship we will visit the Medieval Canisbay Kirk whose position over the Pentland Firth has made it a shipping landmark for centuries.

Day 10 - Aberdeen

Disembark this morning. Transfers will be provided to Aberdeen Railway Station and International Airport at a fixed time.

Please Note:

This voyage is a combination of both expedition style cruising and small ship destination cruising. Whilst we will be alongside in some ports, on many days we will be at anchor and the vessel's Zodiacs will be utilised for transport ashore. The use of the Zodiacs will therefore be key to the operation of the itinerary as shown. If you have any queries pertaining to the use of Zodiacs or the level of fitness required for this voyage please do not hesitate to ask one of our experienced travel consultants.



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YOUR SHIP:

YOUR SHIP:

VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:



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