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Ship Collection

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CENTRAL AMERICAN ODYSSEY - A VOYAGE FROM GUATEMALA TO COSTA RICA

Join us aboard the all-suite MS Hebridean Sky as we explore Central America's Pacific coastline visiting Guatemala, El Salvador, Nicaragua, Costa Rica and Panama. If you have been contemplating a visit to Central America, then this fascinating voyage could offer you the perfect opportunity with its mix of cultural and natural wonders. Our itinerary is made possible by the Panama Canal, an engineering marvel allowing us to pass from the Caribbean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. During our voyage, the history of the ancient Mayan civilisation, the colonial years and the more recent events of the region will be brought to life by our onboard team and local guides. There is also much of the natural world to occupy us on our journey including our visits to Costa Rica's Palo Verde National Park and Curu National Wildlife Refuge, El Salvador's most important marine ecosystem, the Jiquilisco Bay Biosphere Reserve, and the pristine Bocas del Toro archipelago in Panama. The birdlife of the region is magnificent, and it is home to countless species of endangered birds from tiny hummingbirds to flashy macaws and parrots, toucans and woodpeckers. Add an amazingly rich biodiversity of flora and fauna seen against some of the lushest of landscapes to be found anywhere in the world and you have the recipe for a perfect escape. Such a varied and comprehensive itinerary would be difficult to comprehend or undertake by any other means than a cruise aboard a vessel like the MS Hebridean Sky with her expert expedition team, fleet of Zodiacs and just over 100 fellow passengers. We will be able to visit some small islands and ports which the larger cruise vessels simply cannot access and skip the arduous, lengthy land travel which such a trip would usually entail and instead relax on board as we

deliver you to a new and exciting destination each day.

ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Antigua, Guatemala.

Fly by scheduled indirect flight to Guatemala City. On arrival we will transfer to our hotel in Antigua for a two night stay.

Day 2 Antigua.

Spend the day in Antigua, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Built between three magnificent volcanoes in 1542, it is one of the oldest and most beautiful cities in the Americas. Antigua remained an economic and political heart of Central America until a devastating earthquake in 1773 destroyed much of the city. After a morning at leisure, our afternoon tour will explore the city which is a wonder of colonial buildings, beautiful squares, cobblestone streets and Baroque churches. Meet tonight for dinner in the hotel.

Day 3 Antigua to Puerto Quetzal.

We will check out in the late morning and make our way to the Pacific Coast. After lunch we will embark the MS Hebridean Sky in Puerto Quetzal and sail this evening.

Days 4 & 5 Acajutla, El Salvador.

From the port of Acajutla our full day excursion will discover the Mayan route starting at the archaeological site of Joya de Ceren, a UNESCO World Heritage Site known as the Pompeii of America. The site was covered by the Loma Caldera volcano

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explosion which kept the remains of pre-Hispanic civilisation covered for hundreds of years and it provides a unique insight into everyday life in a Mesoamerican farming community of the 6th century AD. We continue to the ruins of San Andres, once an important political and religious centre and testimony of the Indigo industry during the colonial period, better known as the 'Blue Gold'. After lunch in a local restaurant we will continue to Santa Ana and see the beautiful Gothic Cathedral and National Palace before our tour ends at the ruins of Tazumal, the largest pyramid in El Salvador which dates from 1500 BC and is an important Mayan settlement. The following day our morning tour will explore some of the colonial towns and communities on the 'Flower Route' named after the abundance of flowers found along the roadsides and in the villages. We will drive through the beautiful mountains to the town of Nahuizalco, home to one of the most longstanding native communities and arts and crafts production sites in the country. We continue to Ataco, the final stop on the Ruta de las Flores. Ataco is a quaint, colonial village that is known for its natural beauty as well as its brightly painted homes, cobblestone streets, colourful murals and unique arts and crafts. We will return to the MS Hebridean Sky for lunch and a relaxing afternoon at sea.

Day 6 La Union.

We have a day to explore the southern region of El Salvador and will offer a choice of excursion options. You may wish to follow the 'peace route' set up to remember the events of the 1980s when El Salvador experienced a bitter civil war. It is estimated that over 100,000 were killed in the fighting whilst half a million people fled into exile. We will visit Perquin, once a stronghold of the guerrillas and home to the Museum of the Revolution where former members of the rebel army are willing to share their

experiences. We continue to the village of El Mozote where in December 1981 one of the worst atrocities occurred and more than 1000 people were killed in a single day. Our local guides will explain about living in the country during this time and we will see the monument erected for the victims and the memorial garden decorated with brightly coloured murals. Alternatively, visit the Jiquilisco Bay Biosphere Reserve which is El Salvador's most important marine ecosystem with the coastal area being made up of remote islands, mangrove canals and desolate beaches whilst inland we find beautiful forests and cacao plantations. It is an important base for migratory birds as well as a nesting site for four sea turtle species including one of only two sites in the Pacific for the endangered Hawksbill turtle. We explore the different areas of the reserve spending time with the environmentalists and scientists who will teach us about the conservation of the turtles, and we will walk through the forest on the lookout for spider monkeys. We will also visit a cacao plantation where we learn about the cultivation of cacao which creates some of the finest chocolate.

Day 7 Corinto for Leon, Nicaragua.

Spend the morning cruising to the port of Corinto which is our base for a visit to Leon, the former capital of Nicaragua. Here we will explore the colonial architecture and the 18th century cathedral which is one of the most prominent buildings in the city with fantastic views from the rooftop. Inside we will see the fresco paintings, statues and the lion that guards the tomb of Ruben Dario, the famous Nicaraguan poet. There will be some free time for those who wish to visit the bustling market.

Day 8 San Juan del Sur for Granada.

After an early breakfast we will leave from the friendly fishing village of San Juan del Sur for a full day tour to Granada and



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Lake Nicaragua. Founded in 1523, Granada is Nicaragua's oldest Spanish city and has retained much of its Spanish character with colonial churches, narrow streets and colourful Spanish style homes. We will enjoy a walking tour including the cathedral and convent of San Francisco where we find around 30 pre-Colombian stone statues dating back to 800 AD sculpted by the inhabitants of Zapatera Island on Lake Nicaragua. After lunch we continue to Lake Nicaragua and enjoy a relaxing boat ride amongst the 365 small islands created by the volcanic activity of the Mombacho Volcano around 20,000 years ago. Whilst some islands are inhabited, most remain unspoiled and are home to exotic plants, howler monkeys and orchids.

Day 9 Palo Verde National Park, Costa Rica.

Our first stop in Costa Rica is Playa Flamingo in the Papagayo Gulf. Once a small fishing village it has grown into a popular destination for local Costa Rican tourism. We will use our Zodiacs to land before heading inland to the Palo Verde National Park where we will board local boats to travel along the Tempisque River seeing the mangroves and dry forest vegetation which is home to countless birds and multiple mammals. As we will be visiting in the dry season we hope to see peccaries, armadillos, jaguarondis, coatis, agoutis, deer and monkeys which are attracted to the river. We will enjoy lunch at the 19th century Hacienda House with views of the savannahs and sugar cane fields.

Day 10 Curu National Park & Tortuga Island.

We spend the morning exploring the Curu National Wildlife Refuge which boasts a rich and diverse wildlife in five different habitats ranging from marine zones, including a wide beach area, mangrove swamps and tropical forests. Here on a range of

walks we will find a number of species of birds, howler and capuchin monkeys, and turtles. Over lunch we sail the short distance to Tortuga Island where we spend the afternoon relaxing on the white sand beaches or swimming in the clear waters.

Day 11 Puerto Jimenez & Golfito.

Awake in Puerto Jimenez from where we will visit one of the nearby fincas that specialises in cacao production. The crop has been grown in this region since the Mayans and we will learn about the cultivation of the crops and after walking through the plantation will see how it is transformed into chocolate. Alternatively, join a walk in La Perica Sloth Garden where there will be the opportunity to spot the animals in their natural environment as well as other wildlife including hummingbirds and iguanas. Over lunch we sail across Golfo Dulce to spend the afternoon at one of Costa Rica's most famous National Parks, the Golfito National Wildlife Refuge. Spread out over 2,810 hectares it is home to many species of birds including macaws, parrots and brown pelicans whilst common mammal sightings include white-faced capuchins, spider monkeys, howler monkeys and many species of snakes and butterflies.

Day 12 Chiriqui Gulf Marine Park, Panama.

Arrive in Panama and visit the Chiriqui Gulf Marine Park which spreads over 36,000 acres and comprises of 25 islands and numerous coral reefs. Created in 1994, the marine park's Cahuita National Park aim is to aid the preservation of the region's ecosystems, diverse flora and fauna, scientific conservation projects and protect the islands' endangered inhabitants. We will land on one of the islands where you may choose to take a nature walk learning about the local flora and fauna or find a spot under a palm tree on the beach and take a



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swim.

Day 13 Panama Canal Transit.

After a morning at sea we spend the afternoon and evening transiting the Panama Canal. The first attempt to build the canal was made by a French company but ended in failure in 1889. The American government eventually bought out the French for 40 million dollars, and their attempt to build the canal started in 1904. Through the efforts of over 80,000 workers and the loss of more than 30,000 lives, the greatest single construction project ever undertaken was completed. The project ended in triumph, with the Canal opening in 1914, and it is now a vital artery of international trade, with nearly 14,000 ships travelling through it every year.

Day 14 Colon.

Awake on the Caribbean Coast of Panama where, from our berth in Colon, we visit the delightful town of Portobelo which was discovered by Christopher Columbus in 1502. Our tour will provide an insight into the rich history of the area once known as a Paradise for Pirates. Visit Fort San Geronimo, Fort San Felipe, Customs House and the Black Christ Church (the patron Saint of Portobelo). Alternatively, visit the new locks of the Panama Canal expansion. The expansion was the largest project at the Canal since its original construction and created a new set of locks, doubling the waterway's capacity. At the Agua Clara Visitor Centre we can learn about the history of the canal, the expansion efforts and watch the ships passing through.

Day 15 Bocas del Toro.

Today we will explore the Bocas del Toro archipelago, pristine islands which are now part of a national marine park. We spend the day surrounded by astounding beauty with the option to visit

the small town of Bocas del Toro with free time to wander amongst the fine old Spanish buildings or maybe visit one of the local beaches for a swim in the clear waters.

Day 16 Puerto Limon, Costa Rica.

Returning to Costa Rica we head to the Cahuita National Park. The area is filled with wildlife that includes howler monkeys, white-faced capuchin monkeys, raccoons, sloths, otters, coatis, agoutis, armadillos and porcupines. Several avian species also live in the swamp forest including the green ibis, the green kingfisher, the yellow crowned night-heron, the frigate bird and the boat-billed heron among others. Our naturalist guides will lead us through the trails of the rainforest, sharing their vast knowledge of this fragile ecosystem. Alternatively, take a boat ride through the scenic Tortuguero canals, known as the Costa Rican Amazon as the surrounding rainforest supports a wide range of flora and fauna. Here we can hopefully see waterfowl, monkeys, lizards, sloths and toucans. We return to the ship via a banana plantation where we learn about this staple of the local economy.

Day 17 Puerto Limon to London.

Disembark this morning and transfer to San Jose for our scheduled flight to London.

Day 18 London.

Arrive this morning.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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YOUR SHIP: HEBRIDEAN SKY

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

Hebridean Sky has always been known for its effortless elegance, impeccable service and atmosphere of charm and camaraderie. Now we add increased adventure options and an on-site Passenger Service Representative. Hebridean Sky is the perfect blend of luxury and adventurous exploration. Is it a luxury ship? An adventure ship? It's both! The vessel underwent a multi-million pound refurbishment in Sweden in Spring 2016.

ONBOARD DINING Great expeditions require great food! We are pleased to offer daily changing breakfast, lunch and dinner menus with an emphasis on providing well balanced and nutritional cuisine. Our team of international chefs has boat loads of creativity and you are sure to experience a variety of interesting dishes throughout your voyage. The restaurant is located on Deck 2 and our service team looks forward to providing a memorable dining experience.

IMPECCABLE SMALL-SHIP AMENITIES Returning from excursions, passengers enjoy complimentary refreshments, afternoon tea and all-day coffee in The Club, a gracious space for relaxation, surrounded by panoramic windows. Other Sea Explorer features include: Library with Internet access Lounge with audiovisual facilities Dining room Wraparound sun deck with Jacuzzi Exercise room

Medical facilities with available doctor Elevator serving all passenger decks Swimming/zodiac platform All Voyages Include: Up to Two Pre-Voyage Hotel Nights Complimentary Wine or Beer with Dinner Certified Emergency MD and Clinic World Class Cuisine Live Entertainment Complimentary Coffee/Tea station Voyage Photographer Dedicated Passenger Service Manager Complimentary Expedition Jacket Please note deck



plan may vary.



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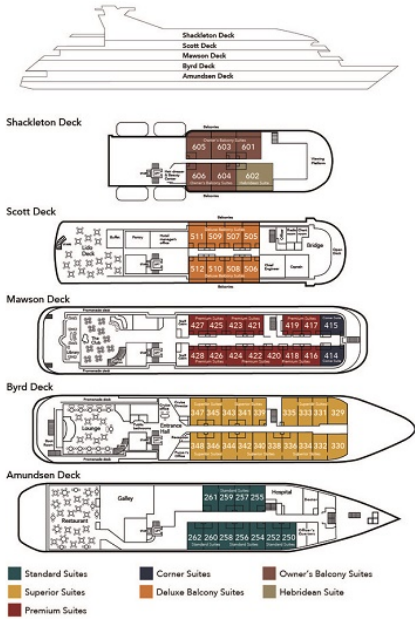
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PRICING



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