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CRUISING ALASKA'S INSIDE PASSAGE – WITH SMITHSONIAN JOURNEYS

In alliance with Smithsonian Journeys. This cruise is part of a collection of PONANT voyages that are specially-tailored for English-speaking travelers who want to engage with the world. In addition to the usual elements of the PONANT experience, the listed price for these voyages includes transfers to and from the ship, talks and discussions aboard ship by world class experts, and a shore excursion or activity in each port of call that encourages guests to embrace the sights, sounds, tastes, and smells of the local environment and culture. This voyage aboard the state-of-the-art expedition vessel Le Soleal offers the very best of what Alaska's Inside Passage has to offer--myriad bays, coves, inlets and islands, teeming with whales, dolphins, bears, and sea birds. It also introduces you to the diverse cultural history of the area, from the indigenous Tsimshian and Tlingit tribes of Metlakatla and Kake, to the Scandinavian and Russian heritages of Petersburg and Sitka. Setting out from Vancouver, you sail through the Johnstone Strait, renowned as the best place in the world to see orcas in the wild, and then into the Inside Passage proper, home to bald eagles, deer, black bear, salmon, dolphins, seals, and much more, before calling at Metlakatla, where Tsimshian dancers perform in full regalia. In Misty Fjords National Monument, you will want to be on the lookout for grizzly bears, orcas, and bald eagles, and when Le Soleal calls in Petersburg, known as "Little Norway," you will have the opportunity to see the lush vegetation of the region up close on a hike through Tongass National Forest. The ancient village of Kake is your introduction to the customs and traditions the Tlingit people, as you visit their community center and see totem carvings, including one of the largest totem poles in the

world, while nearby Endicott Arm provides a close encounter with Dawes Glacier aboard local excursion boats. A day on the northern end of Chichagof Island includes whale watching at Point Adolphus and a visit to the remote fishing village of Elfin Cove for a leisurely hike in the surrounding forest. The final day of your expedition is spent in Sitka, originally a Russian trading post, where a cruise among the small islands and inlets of Sitka Sound provides your last chance to observe sea otters, whales, sea lions, porpoise, harbor seals, brown bears, blacktail deer, bald eagles and a variety of marine birds, and where a walking tour through Sitka National Historical Park includes a host of

Tlingit totems.

ITINERARY

Day 1 VANCOUVER

Verdant and cosmopolitan, Vancouver is one of Canada's most multi-cultural cities. Located in British Columbia on Canada's west coast, it's surrounded by mountains and outdoor activities are popular. In the city, you can immerse yourself in the Asian atmosphere of bustling Chinatown, shop for pashminas and silk saris at the Punjabi Market Indian district and explore the historic area of Gastown. Vancouver Art Gallery is known for works by regional artists, while the Museum of Anthropology houses important First Nations collections. Granville Island Jetty is a fascinating revitalised industrial area that hosts galleries, restaurants and a huge produce market.

Day 2 SAILING IN THE JOHNSTONE STRAIT & AT SEA

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Along the north-east coast of Vancouver Island, Johnstone Strait is a 100 km-long channel formed by an old glacier bed, dotted with a string of lush islands. Sailing amid this wilderness offers fantastic opportunities to observe the wildlife. Humpback whales and resident orcas can be found in the cool and sheltered waters of the strait, and you can try to spot some from your ship's deck. During your journey at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This journey without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, depending on the activities offered, or to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

Day 3 INSIDE PASSAGE & METLAKATLA, ALASKA

Sheltered from the ocean currents of the Gulf of Alaska, this maritime route that weaves a path around the islands and islets of Southeast Alaska will offer you wonderful sailing experience. Conifer forests stretch on forever, interspersed with numerous coves, bays, huge valleys and deep fjords formed by ancient glacial valleys. Accessible only by sea, the fishing villages are surrounded by snow-capped mountains and glaciers that plunge into the waters of this veritable wildlife sanctuary. From your ship's deck, you can try spotting humpback whales or the famous bald eagle, emblem of the region. On the western coast of Annette Island, the small settlement of Metlakatla will

welcome you for a timeless experience. Founded in 1887 by a group of Tsimshians, from British Columbia, the Annette Island Reserve is today the only federal reservation for the indigenous peoples of Alaska. You will have the opportunity to discover their culture, between local arts and crafts, artistic performance and discovering the famous totem poles. A walking tour is also on the agenda for this port of call, in the heart of Alaskan culture.

Day 4 MISTY FJORDS, ALASKA

Rain forest, hypnotic blue lakes, snowy peaks, glacier valleys, waterfalls... You will behold a heavenly vision. This United States monument covering some 8,600 square kilometres is a designated Wilderness Area. This awesome countryside rolls out its majestic carpet of cedars, fir spruces and hemlocks. Here, you can feel Nature's throbbing heartbeat. You may be lucky enough to spot some of the many animal inhabitants, such as sea otters, sea lions and grizzlies.

Day 5 PETERSBURG, ALASKA

Picture this: all around you, translucent waters. In the distance - snow-capped mountains. This is the vision that greets you on disembarking in Petersburg, one of Alaska's largest commercial fishing towns. The heart of the Tongass National forest is for people who yearn for a lungful of the great outdoors. There is some fauna here including no less than 240 species of birds, seals, sea lions, humpback whales. Another special feature of this very lively town is its penchant for art. On its pavements and facades you can admire several murals, totems and sculptures.

Day 6 KAKE, ALASKA & ENDICOTT ARM, ALASKA

Discover the small Tlingit village of Kake, around 60 kilometres west of Petersburg. Located on Kupreanof Island, it houses a community of over 500 inhabitants. Kake is paradise for

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salmon, which spawn in the Gunnuk River near the village. Bald eagles often make an appearance, as do black bears, which come to enjoy the fish. Another singularity of these parts: the presence, on a hill, of a totem pole standing over 60 metres tall, considered the highest in the world. In the heart of the Alexander Archipelago, Endicott Arm fjord is a short inlet on the southern coast of Alaska that boasts spectacular views of virgin wilderness. The azure-blue waters, snow-capped mountains and lush forest are incredible but the main attraction is the Dawes glacier, whose vast, bluish back snakes down the mountain's flank. Weather permitting, you can observe how icebergs are formed by getting a closer look at the white cliff where glacier meets water, or just enjoy watching the resident harbour seals frolicking in the icy waters.

Day 7 POINT ADOLPHUS, ALASKA & ELFIN COVE, ALASKA

Adolphus Point is located opposite the magnificent Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve. This dreamlike site is world famous for watching humpback whales. In the summer season, these majestic mammals come to feed in the nutrient-rich waters. They sometimes even come a few dozen feet from the shoreline, close to the houses and marinas. Orcas, sea lions,... maybe you'll happen upon other marine species in these landscapes of fjords and ice fields. One thing is sure; here are the most beautiful Alaskan waters. At the tip of an island in the Alexander Archipelago, not far from the Canadian border, peaceful Elfin Cove shelters a fishing community that's only linked to the rest of the world by the sea. There is just a dozen wooden houses, a long wooden pontoon and a tiny port surrounded by crystalline waters... It doesn't get any quainter than this. Choose from a network of hiking paths that weave through a pristine forest, to lead you to secret beaches where silence reigns. The wonders of

the Glacier Bay National Park and Preserve, accessible by a short boat trip, are many.

Days 8 - 9 SITKA, ALASKA

Formerly a Russian colony located on Baranof island, to the west of the Alexander archipelago, Sitka is brimming with history. The historical national park of Sitka shelters totems carved out of red cedar, a tree that is omnipresent in the region. These totems are testimonials of the former presence of Tlingit Indians. This place is full of natural wonders too. You just have to look up to admire the mountain range around the port. In the distance, the snow-peaked Edgecumbe volcano stands majestic. Numerous islands scattered around Sitka stretch out before you in a vision of preserved Alaska.

Please Note:

We are privileged guests in these extreme lands where we are at the mercy of weather and ice conditions. The itinerary, landings on certain sites and the observation of certain wildlife cannot be guaranteed. They vary from day to day, making each PONANT cruise a unique experience. The Captain and the Expedition Leader will make every effort to ensure that your experience is as rich as possible.

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

Luxury Small Ship A sleek silhouette, a welcoming intimate atmosphere, and the same philosophy that has made her sister ships, L'Austral, Lyrial and Le Boreal, such a success. This magnificent yacht of only 132 staterooms and suites, all with balconies, has contemporary decor inspired by the luxury yachting world, with fluid lines and a modern colour scheme combining natural wood with shades of grey and white. White Corian counters in the lobby contrast with the warmth of leather to recall a boat's hull, while the central sculpture of enamelled pieces takes its inspiration from the sea. In the lounge bar, the carpet picks up a tennis stripe theme symbolising a certain idea of cruising, one synonymous with French elegance and a chic seaside spirit. Wheelchairs 3 specially adapted wheelchair cabins (Deck 3 = Superior cabin no. 307, no balcony, Deck 4 = Prestige Cabin no. 407 - with balcony and Deck 5 = Prestige Cabin no 509, with balcony) and lifts to all decks/areas. Read about our recent Ponant cruise to Antarctica Please click the following links to read more about Ponant and the other Ponant cruise ships.



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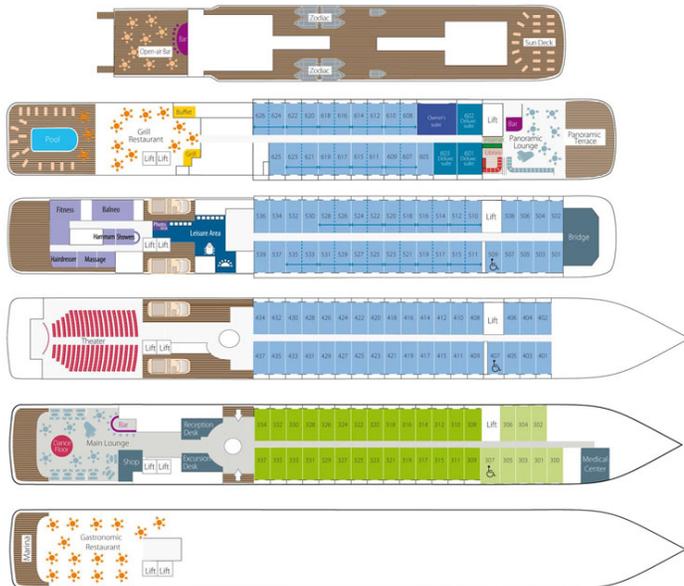
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