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## DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF MELANESIA: PAPUA NEW GUINEA, THE SOLOMON ISLANDS & VANUATU 2024

Sail into a world few will ever experience where unique time-honoured traditions and elaborately costumed dancers welcome us into their world as we explore the rich history, iconic WWII sites, cultures and wildlife of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu on this 17- day authentic expedition cruise. Delve into the culturally rich Trobriand Islands, sometimes called the 'Islands of Love' where indigenous culture continues unchanged for countless generations. Explore the coral-fringed islands of the Louisiade Archipelago and the volcanic wonders of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands, named after the French Explorer Antoine d'Entrecasteaux who discovered them while looking for La Perouse, where sheer mistcovered peaks, wild untamed rivers and rainforest join bubbling mud pools and spouting geysers. Experience the biological wonderland and rare endemic species on remote Woodlark Island and spend a fascinating day exploring Bougainville Island. Enjoy incredible cultural encounters on Loh Island, join Malaita's Kwaio people in a sacred dance and observe the ancient Rom Dance on Ambrym Island. Discover one of the conservation jewels of the South Pacific on Tetepare Island and snorkel Marovo Lagoon - the largest saltwater lagoon in the world. Visit villages on culturally-rich Malaita Island traditional Malaitan shell-money is still made, used as a dowry and worn as a status symbol. Experience a kaleidoscope of cultures as we explore Vanuatu, where more than 100 indigenous languages are spoken. With over 80 habitable islands, islanders have closely guarded their own cultures and languages. Our expedition embraces some of these cultures and languages, as we explore one of the happiest places on the planet. Throughout



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Melanesia there are spectacular reefs, which are home to masses of fish and coral gardens of every colour. These waters offer some of the greatest marine diversity and snorkelling in the world and everybody will have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty beneath the waves. Whether you are snorkelling or swimming, this ocean aquarium is waiting to be explored and discovered. For birders, this itinerary offers once-in-a-lifetime species on remote, hard to reach islands where endemic species have evolved in isolation. The birding potential is exceptional; each day we visit a different island group which offers the opportunity of unique species including White-eyes, Monarch's, Pigeons and

### Day 1: Cairns, Australia

Arrive in the urban tropical paradise of Cairns, gateway to natural wonders the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage Rainforest, and transfer to your hotel where our group will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening meet your fellow voyagers and expedition guides over dinner at the hotel.

### Day 2: Cairns to Port Moresby, Papua New Guinea

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before boarding your flight to Port Moresby, the bustling gateway and capital of Papua New Guinea where village and urban life exist side-by-side. Enjoy a visit to the National Museum and Arts Center, exhibiting one of the finest collections of primitive art in the world before boarding Heritage Adventurer this afternoon. The captain and expedition team will be waiting to greet you on arrival and show you to your cabin. You will have time to settle in and familiarise yourself with the ship; we will also take the opportunity to introduce your expedition team and our voyage plans.

### Day 3 & 4: Louisiade Archipelago, Deboyne & Tagula Islands

After a morning at sea we arrive during the early afternoon in the Louisiade Archipelago which stretches some 400 kilometres along the northern rim of the Coral Sea and is one of the great island arcs of the South Pacific. Rarely visited by outsiders, this area is a wonderland of literally hundreds of islands, lagoons and extensive barrier reefs and home to the seafaring Dobu



Flycatchers.

## ITINERARY



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people. With two days set aside for exploration there will be opportunities to snorkel, perhaps encounter the Manta Rays that are known to frequent these waters at recognised feeding stations or find a Japanese A6M2 Zero, the main fighter plane of the Imperial Japanese Navy, sitting intact in the shallows. Tagula Island is the largest in the archipelago and where we will focus our attention during the second day in the archipelago, a goldrush in 1889 brought the island to the world's attention but today it is the rich tropical forest and endemic wildlife which we will seek including the Tagula Honeyeater and Butcherbird plus endemic frogs and lizards.

### Day 5: D'Entrecasteaux Islands

Awake this morning in the volcanic island chain of D'Entrecasteaux Islands. One highlight will be exploring the island's geothermal area with hot springs and bubbling mud pools surrounded by lush vegetation. Nearby we snorkel among thousands of colourful coral and fish attracted by underwater hot springs flowing through small vents in the ocean floor which send bubbles towards the surface. Described as like "swimming in champagne" the water is incredibly clear and the marine life is renowned for its abundance and the spectacular sizes the coral grows to. We also plan to visit Dobu Island, this small island is a critical link in the Kula Ring which was famously investigated and described by the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski.

### Day 6: Trobriand Islands

Positioned in the Solomon Sea and historically known as the

'Islands of Love', the Trobriands offer a glimpse of traditional culture largely unspoilt by outside influence. During our visit we will enjoy picture postcard white sand beaches, colourful villages, aquamarine water and enchanting marine life. Meet the Trobriand islanders and experience energetic, time-honoured dances that celebrate fishing and the seasonal yam harvest. Learn about the history of the 'Kula Ring', a circular pattern of ceremonial trade relationships that bind the islands of Milne Bay and eastern Papua New Guinea together in a long-established network of friendship. These islanders are also renowned for the exquisite quality of their ebony wood-carvings, often decorated with mother-of-pearl shell inlays. We take to the water and snorkel among kaleidoscopic coral reefs populated by Parrotfish, Neon Damsels and other brilliantly-hued species.

### Day 7: Woodlark Island

Blessed with both biological and mineral treasure troves and more than 2,000 years of human culture, Papua New Guinea's remote outpost Woodlark Island and its people are caught up in the push and pull of conservation versus mining. Its local community remains one of the few self-sufficient, subsistence-based populations in the world while its flora and fauna, left to evolve in seclusion on this unique rainforest island, include more than 40 species found nowhere else on Earth, with scientists predicting many more still awaiting discovery. Recent discoveries include a new species of frog and lizard. At loggerheads with this Woodlark has also been deemed one of the largest and most profitable gold mine developments of recent years. During our time here we plan to enjoy village visits and look for some of the island's unique wildlife including the



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IUCN Red List endangered Woodlark Cuscus, endemic lizards, plants, amphibians and insects, and perhaps even discover new species.

### Day 8: Bougainville Island

Today we discover the treasures of Bougainville, long isolated and in a strange way protected due to the conflict which swirled around its shores. High on many travellers' wish lists, this autonomous region within Papua New Guinea magnificently marries rugged, jungled terrain with amazing coral reefs offshore and is home to some of the greatest biodiversity in the region both above and below the water. Lying to the east of the country's mainland and north of the Solomon Islands, it comprises two main islands and several outlying islands and atolls making it both remote and hard to reach, but perfect for exploration by expedition ship. Discover Bougainville's strong ties and connections with the Solomon Islands, which is reflected in their music, culture and language.

### Day 9: New Georgia Islands, Solomon Islands

The volcanic New Georgia Islands are found in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands and are characterised by extensive reefs and lagoons, rugged terrain and an abundance of rivers. Nature enthusiasts will relish landing on Kolombangara Island, where we plan to visit the Imbu Rano Eco Lodge and Conservation Area which protects the islands central peak and search for the rare Roviana Rail along with other endemic bird species. Snorkel the wreck of a US NAVY Grumman F4F-3 Wildcat (carrier version) WWII plane off a nearby tiny island

where the surrounding reefs are home to some of the highest fish counts in the world. Stock up on the local currency to purchase the wood or stone carvings the people of the Western Province are so famous for.

### Day 10: Nissan Island

Uninhabited for 150 years, this rugged island cloaked in rainforest and fringed with coral reefs is home to one of the Solomon Islands' leading community-driven conservation projects Tetepare Descendants' Association. Receiving international recognition for its conservation and archaeological significance, three species of turtle, including the endangered leatherback, nest on its beaches while other species inhabiting the island and surrounding waters include dugong, the world's largest skink, endemic Tetepare White-eye and many more. A highlight of our voyage, this afternoon we plan to explore and snorkel Marovo Lagoon - the largest saltwater lagoon in the world. Breath-catching both above and below the water, Marovo features a unique, double-barrier reef surrounding the extinct volcanoes of the main central islands and lightfilled cave systems teeming with marine life. Globally outstanding marine biodiversity, coral reefs, estuarine and island complexes, mangrove forests, and sea grass beds await exploration.

### Day 11: Malaita

Mountainous Malaita is home to one-third of the Solomon's total population and features pristine rivers and unexploited tropical forests. This morning we plan to explore the clear and calm waters that surround the island. In the afternoon we have



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been invited by the world-renowned Kwaio People, led by Chief Esau, to discover their traditional way of life which the community have fiercely guarded alongside their ancestral lands. This invitation represents a rare privilege and is made possible by our ongoing connection with the community and our assistance with the development of innovative community conservation programs. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to spend time in the company of some of the most authentic, yet innovative, communities in the region.

### Day 12: Makira

Makira is the most easterly of the main islands in the Solomon's archipelago. This morning we anchor in the calm waters of Star Harbour. Join the naturalists for a Zodiac exploration of the abundant mangrove forests that line the shores, and take a short walk to Makira's south coast where the villagers live much as they have for millennia. We spend time with the locals, who share with us their traditional song and dance. If we are lucky, the local boys might be surfing on their hand-carved palm wood boards.

### Day 13: Nendö, Temotu Province

Nendo is the largest of the Santa Cruz Islands, which lie to the south-east of the Solomon Islands. The Spanish navigator Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira unsuccessfully attempted to establish a colony in 1595. Biologically these islands share more in common with Vanuatu. It is also the home of red feather money, sourced from the Scarlet Honeyeater. Watch the manufacture of red feather money, and join the locals in dances which

reverberate through the ages.

### Day 14: Torres Islands, Vanuatu

Today we sail to the rarely-visited pacific paradise and culturally rich Torres Islands, Vanuatu's northernmost islands. A collection of four main islets fringed with white sand beaches, clear azure waters, volcanic rock and cliffs topped with lush tangled jungles our destination is Loh Island. After a warrior escort and welcome from the Chief we will experience the thrilling and rarely witnessed cultural wonder of the *I h-tem t* - vibrant ritual headdresses known as *tem t* (primordial spirits) used during special singing and dancing ceremonial rituals. The colourful headdresses are regarded by the villagers as having the highest of supernatural powers and are destroyed immediately at the end of the dance ceremony. We will then have time to enjoy tours of the village, surrounding island or snorkel Loh's incredible underwater world.

### Day 15: Honiara, Solomon Islands

Today we explore Vanuatu's largest Island, Santo; location of James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*. Indulge in a swim in the crystalline waters of Champagne Beach with its famed powdery white sand. This afternoon we will enjoy Zodiac cruises to the iconic blue holes of Santo. For those with an interest in the history of the island, there is a visit to Luganville and Million Dollar Point.

### Day 16: Ambrym



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Today we will visit Ambrym, renowned as the island of volcanoes and magic throughout Vanuatu. We plan to head ashore at Ranon on the northern coast where the traditional Rom dance is still practised and custom carving is alive and well. A walk through the forest brings us to the 'arena' where masked dancers emerge from the forest. The forests of Ambrym offer some excellent walks to go in search of the local birds and plants, accompanied by our naturalists. This afternoon enjoy a final snorkel excursion.

Day 17: Port Vila, Vanuatu

Arrive into Port Vila this morning and disembark. Upon disembarking a transfer to your central city hotel or the airport will conclude your voyage. To allow time for disembarkation procedures we do not recommend booking flights from Port Vila before midday.

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.





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## YOUR SHIP: HERITAGE ADVENTURER

**YOUR SHIP:** Heritage Adventurer

**VESSEL TYPE:**

**LENGTH:**

**PASSENGER CAPACITY:**

**BUILT/REFURBISHED:**

Heritage Adventurer is a true pioneering expedition vessel of exceptional pedigree. Often referred to as the 'Grande Dame of Polar Exploration' due to her celebrated history and refined design, she was purpose-built for adventure in 1991 at Finland's Rauma shipyard and specifically designed for Polar exploration. Setting a peerless standard in authentic expedition travel, Heritage Adventurer (formerly known as MS Hanseatic) combines the highest passenger ship ice-class rating (1A Super) with an impressive history of Polar exploration. Having held records for the most northern and southern Arctic and Antarctic navigations, and for traversing both the Northwest and Northeast Passages, makes Heritage Adventurer perfect for pioneering experiential expedition travel. Originally designed to accommodate 184 guests, Heritage Adventurer now welcomes just 140 expeditioners ensuring spacious, stylish and comfortable voyages, while a fleet of 14 Zodiacs ensures all guests are able to maximise their expedition adventure. Heritage Adventurer proudly continues our traditions of exceptional, personalised expedition experiences as Heritage Expeditions flagship. Observation Lounge - One of the most celebrated and best-known features of Heritage Adventurer is the awe-inducing

Observation Lounge, Library and Bar. Located on Deck 7 and perched directly above the Bridge, enjoy sweeping 270-degree views through floor to ceiling windows, perfect for wildlife spotting and quick access to the outer deck. Bring your binoculars to spot wildlife, observe the ever-changing landscape, write in your journal or relax with a book. Observation Deck - Enjoy 360-degree views from the highest point on the ship. The Observation Deck sits above the Observation Lounge and provides exceptional outside viewing options. Stretching the full width of the vessel, this is the perfect spot to take in the surrounding land and seascapes. Perfect on a sunny day, recline in the comfortable sun loungers protected from the wind and elements and watch your voyage unfold. The Bridge - No expedition is complete without visiting Heritage Adventurer's busy nerve centre. Located on Deck 6, Heritage Expeditions' Open Bridge Policy means you are welcome to observe the Captain and crew at work while enjoying some of the ship's best views. It's a fascinating place to learn about navigation and vessel operations, however please note the Bridge will be closed when departing or arriving at port. Dining Room - Indulge in fine international cuisine from our talented chefs in the lavish surrounds of our Dining Room on Deck 4. Sensational 270-degree views provide a stunning backdrop to meals here along with an international wine list featuring many outstanding regional wines. With relaxed seating arrangements, all guests can enjoy dining in a single sitting from hearty breakfasts setting you up for the day's adventure to sumptuous lunches and multi-course evening dining. Bistro - Simple fast and delicious meals and snacks are on offer in our relaxed



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Bistro on Deck 6. Perfect for early risers to enjoy tea, coffee and light breakfast options the Bistro provides great views and opens directly onto a covered and heated teak-deck outdoor dining area. The Bar and Lounge - The social hub of Heritage Adventurer, the Bar and Lounge on Deck 5 features seating for all guests. Enjoy a beverage at the bar, sink into an armchair, relax on one of the many spacious loungers and watch the world go by through the panoramic windows or make new friends at the communal seating. This multi-tasking space also doubles as the location of daily briefings and evening recaps with the expedition team. The Gym - Featuring spectacular ocean views, the well-equipped gym is adjacent to the pool, hot tub and sauna in Deck 7's wellbeing zone. Maintain your routine with an elliptical cross trainer, treadmill, rowing machine, stationary bikes, TRX as well as free weights, yoga mats and fitness balls. Towels are provided with change room and shower amenities nearby. Sauna and Steam Room - True to her Nordic origins, Heritage Adventurer features a dry-heat Finnish sauna and European steam room on Deck 7. Perfect for warming up post Polar plunge or unwinding after a day's adventures, the sauna and steam room include change room facilities, showers and towels. Swimming Pool and Hot Tub - Surrounded by relaxed teak seating including sun loungers, the open-air saltwater pool can be heated or chilled. Encased in glass the hot tub ensures all-weather use, perfect for those who like to relax with a view following a day of exploring. Lectures and Presentations - Enjoy informative and entertaining lectures on history, biology, wildlife, and ecology in the comfort of the Presentation Theatre. With state-of-the-art audio-visual equipment, our world-renowned expedition team will bring your adventure to life through interactive presentations and



discussions.



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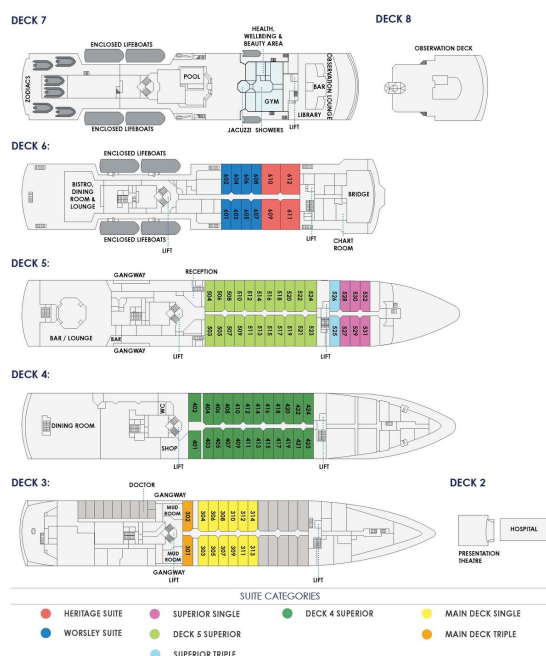
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