

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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ISLANDS ON THE EDGE ABOARD ISLAND SKY

This expedition has been devised to celebrate the stunning scenery of the British Isles from the outlying islands off the English coast to the highlands of Scotland. Every year the popularity of small ship cruising in our own waters grows and this is immensely rewarding as the vast majority of our passengers are from Britain. We have many years of experience in designing trips to the hidden corners of our remotest places and yet, every year we discover something new. Although we set sail with a fixed itinerary it is the unscheduled events that often become the highlight of the journey. This is a truly unique voyage visiting as it does the remarkable islands on the edge of the British Isles with only one non-island call during our voyage; such is the advantage of having a self-sufficient vessel with the qualities of the MS Island Sky. We will sail from Aberdeen and during our cruise visit both inhabited and uninhabited islands and places of great natural beauty, rich in wildlife and mystical history. We have also included a number of gardens from the Hebrides to the Isles of Scilly and for keen birders, there are numerous highlights including sailing past the gannetries on the Skellig islands and at St Kilda, as well as the bird observatory on Cape Clear Island which is one of the top places to watch seabird migration in Europe. Each day there will be the opportunity to explore coastal paths, see the resident wildlife, enjoy the wonderful views on offer and appreciate the ancient and Medieval history of the region. Such a voyage is only possible aboard a small ship with the ability to reach these remote ports and, with the use of our Zodiacs, we will be able to explore in small groups, ensuring the solitude we find on these isles is not disturbed.



ITINERARY

Day 1 Aberdeen, Scotland.

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Embark this afternoon. Transfers will be provided from Aberdeen Airport and Railway Station at a fixed time. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 2 Fair Isle, Shetland Islands.

This morning we arrive at the remote island of Fair Isle. Located midway between the Shetland and Orkney Islands, the tiny population of sixty or so islanders always extend us a warm welcome. Enjoy a walk across the island searching out the puffin slopes, visit the community hall for a cup of tea or maybe purchase some of the famous knitwear. Sail this afternoon for Lerwick where we moor overnight.

Day 3 Lerwick.

From the Shetland capital, we will visit the remarkable archaeological site of Jarlshof. The site was uncovered by a violent storm in the winter of 1896/7, revealing an extraordinary settlement site embracing at least 5000 years of human history. The site contains a remarkable sequence of stone structures – late Neolithic houses, a Bronze-Age village, an Iron-Age broch and wheelhouses, several Norse longhouses, a Medieval farmstead and the 16th century laird's house. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a free afternoon to explore this historic port. Perhaps wander through its narrow stone lanes or maybe visit the excellent Shetland Museum, containing artefacts from shipwrecks and the whaling era.

Day 4 Isle of Lewis, Outer Hebrides.

After a morning at sea we arrive on the Isle of Lewis. On leaving the island capital of Stornoway, we will head across the island to the beautiful west coast. Described as Scotland's Stonehenge, the Callanish Standing Stones date from around 3000 BC. There are a total of 32 stones in a circular and avenue

design. The stones stand like a petrified forest on the flat top of a peninsula which reaches out into East Loch Roag. We also visit the Dun Carloway Pictish Broch, probably built sometime in the last century BC, it would have served as an occasionally defensible residence for an extended family complete with accommodation for animals at ground floor level. Our final stop is the Gearranan Blackhouse Village – a reconstructed settlement of traditional black houses which were made using dry stone masonry and have thatched roofs, distinctively weighted down with rocks. Visit the small museum, enjoy a display of a typical crofting activity such as weaving and take in the views of this dramatic site on the wild Atlantic coast.

Day 5 St Kilda & Stac Lee.

We spend the morning at St Kilda, a remarkable uninhabited archipelago some fifty miles beyond the Outer Hebrides. Dominated by the highest cliffs and sea stacks in Britain, Hirta, St Kilda's main island was occupied on and off for at least two thousand years, with the last 36 Gaelic speaking inhabitants evacuated at their own request in 1930. Immediately after the evacuation, the island was bought by the Marquess of Bute to protect the island's thousands of seabirds including puffin and fulmars and in 1957 it was bequeathed to The National Trust for Scotland. St Kilda is one of the few UNESCO World Heritage Sites with dual status reflecting its natural and cultural significance. The local ranger will join us on board before our expedition staff lead guided walks on the island. Later, we will cruise past one of the largest gannetries in the world at Stac Lee. The impressive stacs rise 170 metres from the sea and are home to up to 60,000 breeding pairs of northern gannet.

Day 6 Loch Scavaig & Canna.

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Awake in the lovely Loch Scauaig on the Isle of Skye. Just beyond is the freshwater Loch Corruisk with its breathtakingly beautiful view over the Cuillins. This is great walking country and our expedition team will run a series of hikes for all interests. For those who prefer a less energetic morning our Zodiacs will explore the coast looking out for seals. Enjoy lunch on board as we cross over to Canna. Strategically placed between the mountains of Rum and the Outer Hebrides, the island of Canna and its adjoining neighbour Sanday are bound together like some rare text that reveals over 60 million years of Hebridean geology and history. They have an amazingly rich archaeological landscape with remains dating to all periods of settled occupation in Scotland. Canna is run as a single farm and bird sanctuary by the National Trust for Scotland and enjoys the best harbour in the Small Isles, a horn shaped haven. The fertile soil and its diversity of habitats mean that the island has an incredibly rich plant life with 248 native flowering plants recorded. We will see Canna House and wander across grassy basalt plateaus to the 600 foot cliffs on the north shore.

Day 7 Staffa & Iona.

Over breakfast we will anchor off Staffa, where the perpendicular rock face features an imposing series of black basalt columns, known as the Colonnade, which have been cut by the sea into cathedralesque caverns, most notably Fingal's Cave. Weather permitting, we will use our Zodiacs to explore closer. We then plan to cruise the short distance to the Isle of Iona which has been occupied for thousands of years and has been a place of pilgrimage and Christian worship for several centuries. It was to this flat, Hebridean island that St Columba fled from Ireland in 563 and established a monastery. Here his followers were responsible for the conversion of much of pagan Scotland and

Northern England. No less than 62 Scottish Kings are buried in the Abbey. Visit the Abbey, perhaps walk along the white sandy beaches or go in search of the cornrake amongst the irises.

Day 8 Tory Island, Northern Ireland.

Spend the morning on Tory Island, located off the northwest coast of Ireland and home to 150 or so Gaelic speakers. It is the most remote inhabited Irish island; although only 14 miles offshore, it feels like many more and island life here is full of traditions. Meet some of the local community in the village hall and enjoy some of their legendary storytelling, music and dance. Tory Island is also famous for its migratory birds; seabirds nest here in large numbers and a puffin colony nests on the northern cliffs. Look out for guillemots, kittiwakes, fulmars, storm petrels and Manx shearwaters and we hope to hear the calls of the cornrake for which the island is known. Return to the ship for lunch and an afternoon at sea.

Day 9 Valentia Island & Skellig Islands, Ireland.

Arrive today at the famous Kerry (Iveragh) peninsula where we anchor at the port of Knightstown on Valentia Island. Spend the morning exploring the island, perhaps take a coastal walk, visit the tropical gardens at Glanleam or join an island drive including the Cromwell Point Lighthouse. In the early afternoon we will arrive off The Skelligs, tiny islands just off the magnificent coast of the Dingle Peninsula. Weather permitting, we will sail around these mystical islands with their early Christian history. Skellig Michael is a World Heritage Site and atop this rugged pyramid, that rises from the sea, are the ruins of a monastery. Meanwhile at Little Skellig the sky can on occasion turn white as some of the 20,000 pairs of breeding gannets leave their roosts.

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Day 10 Cape Clear Island & Mizen Head.

Cape Clear is Ireland's southernmost inhabited place, located eight miles from the Cork coast and home to 120 Gaelic speaking residents. It is a great place to spend a morning and there will be options to visit the Cape Clear Bird Observatory, the Heritage Centre with archive information on the island, or to join a series of island walks where we may see some of the active birdlife and enjoy the views over the Atlantic. Later we hope to use the Zodiacs to land at the quaint village of Schull from where we will take the road to Mizen Head, the most southwesterly point of Ireland. Here we find the famous signal station and there will be a choice of walks, all offering stunning views along the west coast and a great chance to see kittiwakes, gannets and choughs as well as seals on the rocks below. Those feeling active may also want to climb down to the Keepers Quarters including displays on the Fastnet lighthouse, the Marconi radio room and the bird mural room, home to a spectacular mural by Jules Thomas showing the birds of the Mizen peninsula, their habitats, nests and eggs.

Day 11 Tresco & St Agnes, Isles of Scilly.

Spend the morning 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 café. On St Agnes we find the most southwesterly community in the UK. Surrounded by rocks and reefs this delightful tiny island offers marvellous coastal walks. The small island of Gugh lies across a narrow sandbar and here we find a single stone monolith called the 'Old Man of Gugh' which dates back to the Bronze Age.

Day 12 Guernsey & Herm, Channel Islands.

Anchor this morning off Guernsey, the 'Island of Flowers'. There will be the option of a walking tour of St Peter Port including a visit to Castle Cornet, a 12th century battlement which guards the entrance to St Peter Port Harbour. Alternatively, enjoy a panoramic island drive during which we will see the beautiful coastline and beaches and also visit the Little Chapel, built in 1914 as a miniature version of the famous basilica at Lourdes and covered in fragments of shattered china. Over lunch we sail the short distance to Herm, the smallest inhabited Channel Island and, at just one and a half miles long and half a mile wide, perfect for discovering on foot. You will have free time to explore, perhaps take a stroll over to Shell or Belvoir Beach. Alternatively, join our naturalists on the lookout for wildflowers and birds.

Day 13 Portsmouth.

Disembark this morning. Transfers will be provided to Portsmouth Harbour Railway Station at a fixed time.

Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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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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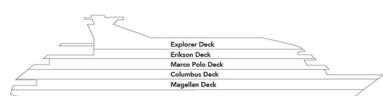
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INSIDE YOUR SHIP



Explorer Deck



Erikson Deck



Marco Polo Deck



Columbus Deck



Magellan Deck



Standard Suites Corner Suites with Deck Access Owner's Balcony Suites
Superior Suites Deluxe Balcony Suites Island Suite
Premium Suites with Deck Access



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PRICING



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