



The Small Cruise
Ship Collection

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ISLANDS OF THE EAST CHINA SEA - A VOYAGE FROM HONG KONG TO KOBE

Here is a unique voyage offering the opportunity to visit little known and remote regions that are well away from the usual cruise routes in the Far East. Setting sail from the vibrant city of Hong Kong to Taiwan, we will explore this culturally alluring country with its blend of tradition and technology before we continue on to the islands of Japan which form an archipelago stretching some 500 miles bordered by the East China Sea and Pacific Ocean. Cruising amongst these delightful outpost islands which are probably best described as Japan's Outer Hebrides, offers an altogether different experience from Japan's mainland. Taiwan, a relatively unexplored treasure in the Far East offers breathtaking scenery and a remarkable diversity for an island of its size. During our exploration, we will discover Tainan, Taiwan's oldest city where tradition lives on, and the ultra modern capital, Taipei which is an interesting place to learn more about the Japanese colonial period and the more recent era of Chiang Kai Shek. Whilst in Taiwan we also have a day to explore one of the country's natural wonders, the spectacular Taroko Gorge National Park. Sailing on to Japan, we reach the southernmost inhabited islands which are home to idyllic beaches, crystal clear waters and an abundance of natural wonders. Largely unspoilt, we will enjoy three days cruising amongst these delightful outposts including the Yaeyama and Amani islands. Then on to Yakushima Island which is a world away from the hustle and bustle of Japan's megacities with its towering mountains and ancient forest and here we can enjoy nature at its very best whilst on guided walks to appreciate the diverse fauna including the impressive old cedars. Finally, we reach Japan's mainland for an altogether different experience where

we will visit Uwajima to learn about pearl cultivation and spend time in the iconic gardens of Koraku-en. This unusual itinerary will appeal to those who have perhaps visited Japan's mainland and would now like to explore her islands combined with the treasures of Taiwan, or those simply looking for something different, combining explorations of the natural world with a look at the culture of the region visiting a number of ports which are off the usual cruise route. All this will be achieved with great ease sailing aboard the MS Island Sky and in the company of just over 100 fellow like-minded passengers, our expert Guest Speaker and Japanese guides who will bring to life all that we see and

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Day 2 Hong Kong.

Arrive and transfer to the MS Island Sky. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 3 At Sea.

Spend a relaxing day at sea as we sail towards Taiwan.

Day 4 Tainan, Taiwan.

This morning we arrive at our first port of call in Taiwan, the southern city of Kaohsiung which is our base for our excursion to nearby Tainan, the former capital of Taiwan. During our tour we will see the Chikan Tower, built by the Dutch in 1653 as an administrative centre, and the Koxinga Shrine dedicated to General Chenggong. We will continue to the beautiful Confucius Temple which is over three hundred years old and played a key role in education and is now a venue for cultural festivals and events. This afternoon we will drive to the Fo Guang Shan Buddha Museum which covers over 100 hectares and is home to the 108 metre high bronze Buddha, the largest seated bronze Buddha in Asia. The museum houses a number of permanent exhibitions about the life of Buddha, Buddhist festivals and relics. We will enjoy lunch here before exploring this impressive site.

Day 5 Penghu Islands.

experience.

ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Hong Kong.

Fly by scheduled flight.

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Staying in the Taiwan Straits we visit the Penghu archipelago made up of 64 islands of which only 20 are inhabited. We will base ourselves in the historic capital of Magong where we find an array of historical buildings and temples. See the 16th century Queen of Heaven Temple (Mazu Temple) which is Taiwan's oldest and finest temple and is classified as the first grade relic. Whilst on Zhongyang Street, one of the oldest in the islands, we will hear about the "Four-eyed well". Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and this afternoon we will continue to explore the island.

Day 6 Taichung.

From our berth in Taichung we have a choice of tours. Choose from a full day tour inland to the Sun Moon Lake, the largest lake in Taiwan and so named as the eastern part of the lake is round like the sun and the western side is shaped like a crescent moon. Its crystalline, emerald green waters reflect the hills and mountains which rise on all sides and provide one of Taiwan's most mesmerising landscapes. We will spend time on the lake and also visit one of the temples on the banks before enjoying lunch. We return to the ship via the Chung Tai Chun Monastery, a lavish monument to Chan Buddhism which has fused ancient traditions with modern architecture. Alternatively, join a half day tour to Lukang, one of Taiwan's oldest port towns which was used as a major harbour by Dutch traders in the 17th century. We will see the 17th century Lungshan Temple, one of the best preserved in Taiwan, whilst in Old Street we can see the historic buildings or purchase some of the rare handicrafts produced here. Return to the ship for lunch and a free afternoon in Taichung.

Day 7 Keelung for Taipei.

After breakfast we will travel by coach to Taiwan's capital, Taipei. We will delve into the history and heritage of Taiwan and explore how Taipei fuses the past with modernity. We begin our exploration at the National Palace Museum which houses over 600,000 priceless treasures of Chinese art, many dating back almost 5,000 years. Many of the items were removed from the Forbidden Place before the Communist revolution. From here we will visit the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, which pays tribute to the former President of Taiwan. Lunch will be at a local restaurant where we will enjoy a range of dishes including dumplings. Later we will ride the lift to the 89th floor of the Taipei 101 building for panoramic views of the city and after some time at leisure will return to the ship.

Day 8 Hualien.

From our berth in Hualien we will enjoy a full day tour of the Taroko Gorge National Park. Taroko means "magnificent and beautiful" in the local Truku language, and it is clear to see why the name was used. The gorge itself stretches for 20 kilometres with marble cliffs rising hundreds of metres above the Liwu River. We will see the Swallow Grotto and the Tunnel of Nine Turns, a 1.9 kilometre path cut into the cliffs following the route of the original tracks along the gorge and the Changuang Temple, a Buddhist monastery with commanding views of the river. Enjoy a local lunch before returning to the ship later in the afternoon.

Day 9 Ishigaki, Japan.

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Our first call in Japan will be at the Yaeyama Islands, a cluster of coral reefs and forested mountains. This morning, from our base in Ishigaki we will explore the island. Our tour will start with a visit to the Yoneko-Yaki Pottery to learn about the craft of making the famous Shisa - half dog, half lion statuettes, typically sold in pairs. From here we will drive along the scenic roads to Ishigaki Yaima Village. We will explore this open-air museum that has preserved traditional Japanese houses. Located in the forests, keep an eye out for the local wildlife such as squirrel monkeys. There will also be a chance to walk through the mangroves along the boardwalk and see the unique flora and fauna. Later, after lunch on board, we will take in more of the island with a visit to the Tamatoizaki Cape, where from the observatory there are wonderful views of the Hirakubo Peninsula and the sea of Ishigaki. We will continue to Kariba Park located on Kariba Bay, taking in the stunning views while exploring the shrines and statues that decorate the park. Our final stop will be the Yaesen Brewery which produces awamori, a sake-like Okinawan spirit.

Day 10 At Sea.

Enjoy a day at sea with time to relax on deck and join the lecture programme in the lounge.

Day 11 Naze, Amami Oshima.

Today we arrive on Amami Oshima, a natural sub-tropical paradise situated in the Amami Islands and surrounded by

transparent waters, brightly coloured coral reefs and tropical fish. The island is almost entirely covered in forest and mangrove and offers fantastic bird watching and wildlife sightings. We have the day to explore and will visit the Nature Observation Park where we can walk through the forest and hope to see the Amami jay, ruddy kingfisher, Ryukyu akashobin, butterflies and possibly the rare black hare. We will also see local industry and watch the process of making tsumugi and kasuri silk-cotton fabrics, used for making kimonos, at the Oshima Tsumugi Village, a craft complex in a beautiful hillside setting amongst flowers. Many of the local plants are used in dyeing. In the afternoon we will visit the Amami Park which focuses on the artist Tanaka Isson with a museum of his works which depict the natural beauty and life of Amami.

Day 12 Miyanouira, Yakushima.

Today we spend the morning on the island of Yakushima which became Japan's first World Heritage Site in 1993. Yakushima is famous in botanical circles for many great garden plants, including dwarf plants that have evolved to grow smaller than their mainland cousins. We will spend time here on nature walks, including Yakusugi Land, a nature park populated by a number of the island's ancient cedar trees. Return to the ship for lunch and spend an afternoon at sea.

Day 13 Uwajima.

Arrive this morning in Uwajima, situated deep inside the saw-toothed coast of Uwajima Bay. Today there is a choice of morning tours; Uwajima is the nation's largest pearl cultivation

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centre and you can learn the process of cultivating and sorting pearls on a visit to a pearl farm before continuing on to Tensha-en Garden which is a typical example of a Japanese garden built during the Samurai era. Alternatively, explore the ancient Uwajima Castle and Tensha-en Garden. The afternoon is at leisure to relax on board or explore further independently.

Day 14 Uno-Ko.

From the port of Uno-Ko we will visit one of Japan's most famed gardens, Koraku-en, which translates as "Garden of pleasure after". This 17th century formal garden has 28 acres of walking trails, ponds, plum and cherry trees, and a classic teahouse where we will experience a traditional tea ceremony. After a Japanese lunch in a local restaurant, we will continue to Kurashiki where we explore the old merchant quarter and its fine 17th century wooden warehouses painted white with traditional black tiles, along a canal framed with weeping willows and filled with koi. There is also a chance to visit the Ohara Museum of Art which includes rare works by Matisse, Picasso and Renoir as well as collections from Japan's Mingei movement including ceramics by Hamada Shoji.

Day 15 Kobe.

Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

Day 16 London.

Arrive this morning.

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.

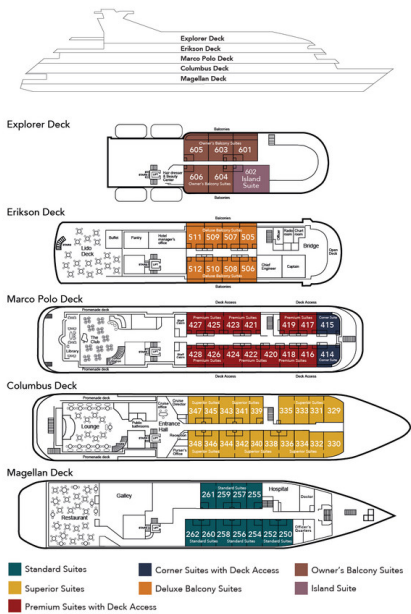
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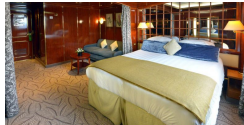
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Columbus Deck Superior Suite



Erikson Deck Deluxe Balcony Suite



Explorer Deck Island Suite



Explorer Deck Owner's Balcony Suite



Magellan Deck Standard Single



Magellan Deck Standard Suite

Marco Polo Deck Corner Suite

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