

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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MADAGASCAR - THE EIGHTH CONTINENT

Join us aboard the MS Hebridean Sky for a full circumnavigation of the fascinating island of Madagascar. The animals, plants, landscapes and people that make up this thousand mile long island are unlike anywhere else in the world and we have the luxury of two weeks of exploration to experience the many wonders of the island. During our comprehensive itinerary there will be ample opportunity to discover the rainforests which are full of wildlife including the iconic lemur, chameleons and indigenous birdlife as well as seeing the underwater world and village life. Madagascar has long remained obscure as a destination and is still relatively unexplored, there is minimal infrastructure in many parts of the island and for those wishing to explore in some depth, doing so by small ship, especially one as well-suited as the MS Hebridean Sky is far preferable to exploring by any other means. In the company of just 100 fellow guests our days will be spent exploring ashore, often traversing over rugged terrain and walking through spectacular rainforests, and each evening we will have the benefit of returning to our comfortable ship to relax and look forward to the next adventure. With the vessel's fleet of Zodiacs for forays ashore, allowing access to the wonderful places denied to larger ships, we will explore and enjoy encounters with fabulous endemic wildlife in this immensely rich and timeless corner of the Indian Ocean. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by our expert crew and officers who, along with our expedition team including marine biologists, ornithologists and botanists have many years of experience in the region.



ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Mauritius.

Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

Day 2 Mauritius.

Arrive today and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky moored in Port Louis. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 3 Reunion Island.

We arrive at breakfast in Reunion where we have a choice of excursions. On a full day tour we will visit the central highlands where spectacularly rugged peaks of dormant or extinct volcanoes cradle huge amphitheatres known as cirques, where

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mountains tower to over 10,000 feet and beautiful waterfalls plummet hundreds of feet. The rich soil and mellow climate produce a lush and verdant landscape which is dotted with villages and towns with a uniquely French atmosphere. Fields of sugar cane and plantations of tropical fruits, vanilla and all manner of spices perfume the air. We will enjoy views from the Nez des Bouefs and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant we will visit the 'Cite du Volcan' museum. Alternatively enjoy a morning tour to a vanilla plantation in St Andre where we learn about the history and culture of this integral part of Reunion's heritage. Continue to Salazie, a verdant landscape and home to many waterfalls including the 'Voile de la Mariee' before spending some free time in St Denis on the way back to the ship. This afternoon is at leisure before we set sail this evening.

Day 4 At Sea.

Spend the day at sea as we sail towards Madagascar. Maybe join a lecture or find a spot on deck to relax.

Days 5 & 6 Taolagnaro, Madagascar.

Our first call in Madagascar is the southeastern port of Taolagnaro, also known as Fort Dauphin. This was the first French settlement in Madagascar, situated on a peninsula overlooked by the Anosy mountains. We will moor overnight and during our afternoon and morning here we will offer a choice of excursions including the Nahampoana Private Park. The reserve is only 67 hectares but home to four species of lemur including ring-tailed and sifakas whilst the gardens showcase Madagascan plants with three-cornered palms and spiny Desiderata trees. A tour of Taolagnaro will include the market, public gardens and the Fort Flacourt Museum where we will learn about the arrival of the Magalasy people to Madagascar

and the historical links with Reunion. Also enjoy walks in the forest at the Madena Conservation Zone, a 200 hectare park protected from the region's mining industry and where we hope to see bamboo lemur and different varieties of orchids.

Day 7 Tulear.

Having sailed around the southern tip of Madagascar we arrive in Tulear at lunchtime. This afternoon you may like to join the tour to the Antsokay Arboretum which is entirely devoted to the conservation of the plants from the south west of Madagascar and, after more than 30 years of hard work, offers a densely kept selection of flora presenting a typical sub-arid thicket with baobab trees towering over the smaller plants. We will see the four hectare botanical garden which comprises over 900 species of plants of which 90% are endemic to the region. Alternatively visit the Reniala Private Reserve, a small area of just 60 hectares but containing a spiny forest which is unique to southern Madagascar. The park is home to 200 plant species including baobabs as well as being a haven for birders with sightings of paradise flycatchers, Madagascar hoopoe and Madagascar crested drongo.

Day 8 Andavadoaka & Nosy Hao.

The vessel will anchor this morning off the small fishing community of Andavadoaka, home to the Vezo fishing people. The area offers the most diverse marine ecosystem on the southwest coast. It is also the base for Blue Ventures, a marine conservation society that has helped the local villagers invest in their community by way of training local guides and showing ways to preserve their resources. We hope to learn more about the local projects before sailing over lunch to Nosy Hao to discover the sandy white beaches where we can enjoy a swim in the warm waters.



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Day 9 Morondava.

From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, we will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach. From here there will be a choice of excursions to explore the local region. A half day morning tour will visit the Avenue des Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the world, six are endemic to Madagascar and here we will see the *Adansonia grandidieri* species with a row of 20 to 25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before returning to Morondava and exploring the local market. Alternatively, join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest. Situated approximately a two hour drive from Morondava, we will pass the Avenue des Baobabs as we travel north. Kirindy is a 10,000 hectare, dry deciduous forest, one of the most endangered in the world where the flora and fauna includes many endemic species. Here we find three species of baobab, many birds and reptiles including snakes, tortoises and lizards. Eight species of lemur reside here including the pale form marked lemur.

Day 10 At Sea.

Spend a leisurely day on board as we continue our journey around the Madagascan Coast.

Day 11 Mahajanga.

Mahajanga is a major port in northwest Madagascar situated on the Betsiboka River and is our base for a full day excursion to Ankarafantsika National Park. This deciduous forest is a haven for birds, lemurs and reptiles and on a choice of walks, we will explore with our guides. Eight species of lemur have been observed here including the famous *Microcebus*, the smallest primate in the world. Meanwhile over 120 species of birds nest here and we will keep an eye out for the Madagascan fish eagle and banded kestrel whilst the 44 species of reptile include

chameleon, turtles and crocodiles that live in Lake Ravelobe. We will enjoy lunch in the park and in the afternoon there will be options to join further walks or watch for birdlife at the nearby lake before returning to the MS Hebridean Sky.

Day 12 Nosy Tanikely.

We arrive mid-morning at the Nosy Tanikely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island which offers snorkelling opportunities and wonderful beaches. We will take the chance to either swim in the clear waters or snorkel over the corals keeping an eye out for reef fish, turtles and morays. Alternatively our naturalists will lead guided walks on the island where we may see the resident lemurs, fruit bats and hermit crabs and enjoy fantastic views from the lighthouse on the island's highest point.

Day 13 Nosy Hara.

As we continue our journey along the western coast of Madagascar we will find a number of strangely shaped limestone islets that dot the aquamarine-coloured sea. The expedition team will decide on the most suitable island for landing, such as Nosy Hara with its abundant birdlife and great places to swim off the beach. We will spend the day exploring the island on foot, walking through dense woodland and observing the unusual vegetation. Alternatively join a Zodiac cruise around the islands and a chance to snorkel over the coral.

Day 14 Diego Suarez.

This morning we will enter dramatic Diego Suarez, a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. This morning choose from a city tour visiting the Commonwealth Cemetery



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and Place Joffre, or a visit to the Malagasy rainforest at the Mount Amber National Park. Dividing into short and long walk parties we will go in search of lemurs and chameleons as we explore the rainforest. In the towering vegetation, we may spot several species of lemurs and chameleons as well as endemic birds, including parrots. Return to the ship for lunch and an afternoon cruising.

[Days 15 & 16 Nosy Mangabe & Masoala National Park.](#)

We will spend a day and a half exploring from our anchorage in Antongil Bay. We discover Nosy Mangabe, a 520-hectare island reserve and one of the most diverse areas of virgin rainforest in Madagascar which has also been an important research centre since the mid-1960s when several aye-ayes and lemurs were released into the forest. We will use our Zodiacs to land on the beach next to the forest and organise a series of nature walks looking at the varied trees, plants and ferns and we hope to spot chameleon, lizards and black and white ruffed lemur. For the birders, we will keep an eye out for Madagascar buzzard, kingfisher and paradise flycatchers. We will also explore Madagascar's largest protected area, the Masoala National Park, which comprises of coastal rainforest, flooded forests, marsh and mangroves. Mammal species encountered include the redruffed lemur, the red-fronted brown lemur and the ring-tailed mongoose. The park is also home to various species of brightly coloured mantella frogs, all manner of extraordinary chameleons and is a refuge of the endangered Madagascar red-owl, Madagascar serpent eagle and many endemic bird species. A series of walks for all levels will operate whilst there will also be the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

[Day 17 Taomasina.](#)

Our final call in Madagascar is Taomasina, the country's main port and second largest city as well as the gateway to the Pangalanes Canals, a series of rivers, waterways and lakes that extend for over 400 miles down the island's east coast. Used mainly for transportation and fishing, the canals are also home to unspoiled beaches, lagoons and lakes whilst providing access to national parks and private reserves. This morning we will take a local boat cruise through the canal to enjoy the scenery followed by a nature walk in one of the private reserves. Enjoy lunch in the reserve before returning to Taomasina this afternoon. Alternatively visit the Ivoloia Zoological Parc, a 282 hectare property combining a small zoo where we will see up to 12 species of lemur as well as indigenous tortoises and chameleons. Meanwhile in the surrounding forests we can see wild lemurs or malachite kingfishers on one of the many walking trails.

[Day 18 At Sea.](#)

Enjoy the day at sea to relax and reflect on our Madagascan adventure as we sail back to Mauritius.

[Day 19 Mauritius to London.](#)

Disembark this morning and enjoy a morning tour of Mauritius including the Trou-aux-Cerfs Volcano, the Grand Bassin Lake and Black River Gorges. After lunch we transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

[Day 20 London.](#)

Arrive this morning.

[Please Note:](#)

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your



experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from previous expeditions which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

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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.

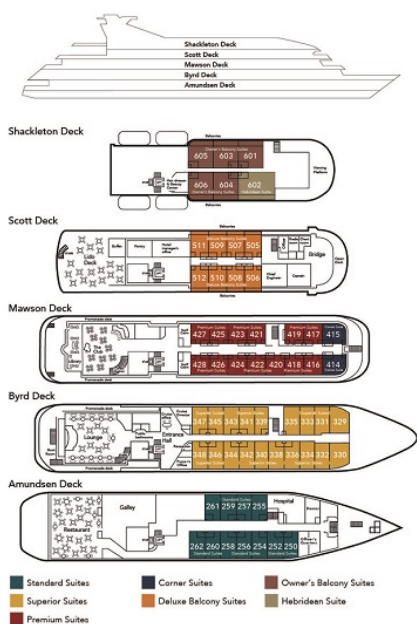
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