



## The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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## MALTA TO MADEIRA

Join us as we mark 25 years since our very first cruise aboard the much loved, MS Caledonian Star. Since that time well over one quarter of a million people have travelled with us on a myriad of trips to every corner of the world, and by every means of transport known to man. We hope to see many familiar faces onboard in order that we can express our thanks for such marvellous continued support, that has allowed the company to progress to where we are today. There will be interesting talks by our eminent guest speaker and London Festivals Opera Artistic Director, Philip Blake-Jones as well as wonderful recitals by London Festival Opera and keeping good order will be our popular cruise director Neil Horrocks, ably assisted by Chantal Cookson who was onboard our very first cruise twenty-five years ago, then travelling as Chantal Langley. There will of course also be some added surprises along the way as we celebrate in style whilst cruising from Malta, around Sicily to Sardinia. Our cruise will include visits to some of the most prominent archaeological sites in Sicily, tastings of the local wines in Sardinia and concerts by London Festival Opera in private palazzos of Palermo and Syracuse as well as a gala concert onboard. We have tried to ensure that our cruise is educational but also relaxing with the chance to explore independently as well as on included excursions. After setting sail from Vallettas Grand Harbour we will appreciate Sicilys rich artistic legacy of so many invading civilisations from the comfort of the MS Hebridean Sky with the help of knowledgeable local guides before spending a day in Sardinias ancient city of Cagliari. The timing of the voyage in the autumn is ideal both for the weather and the lack of crowds. As we sail this ancient maritime route we will encounter

monuments and ruins of an extraordinary broad sweep of time: Neolithic Nuraghi on Sardinia, the megalithic stone monuments of Menorca, the Roman remains of coastal Iberia, the flowering of Islamic architecture in Spain together with Medieval delights including the Cistercian monastery of Poblet. Leaving Spain we call into Gibraltar and the more recent 18th century challenges of defending the rock from the Spanish and French attacks. Turning left at the Pillar of Hercules we will follow the Moroccan coast down to Casablanca. From here there is the opportunity to join a two day overland excursion to the incomparable desert city of Marrakech, re-joining the vessel further along the coast in Safi. The old walled city of Marrakech is an intoxicating mix of architecture, colour and aromas, a timeless gem that leaves a lasting impression. Leaving the coast of Morocco we head out into the ocean enjoying a relaxing day at sea on course for Madeira. From here you can fly directly back to the UK, or stay on for a few days at one of the worlds most justifiably famous hotels, the magnificently sited Reids Palace Hotel. From its lofty position above the islands capital you can enjoy the splendid gardens and old world charm and relax in its five

star comfort.

### ITINERARY

Day 1 - London Gatwick to Malta.

Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky moored in the grand harbour of Valletta. Enjoy a Welcome Drink and Dinner as we set sail this evening to Sicily.

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### Day 2 - Licata, Sicily.

Founded in 280 B.C by the Phintias, Licata has grown into an important commercial centre on the island of Sicily. It is our base today from where we begin our journey inland to what is regarded as the finest Roman site on Sicily, the Imperial Roman Villa of Casale, which is located close to Piazza Armerina amidst wooded rolling countryside. This huge villa was built in the 3rd century and features some stunning floor mosaics. We will also explore the Medieval centre of Piazza Armerina with its Aragonese Castle and the Romanesque Church of Sant Andrea. Our return drive to the Sea Explorer in Licata takes us through the province of Caltanissetta, which is recognised today as one of the best wine making regions in Italy thanks above all to its production of high quality, prestigious red wines including Nero d'Avola. We will break our journey at one of these vineyards and enjoy a chance to sample wine over a Sicilian lunch. Return to the ship in the late afternoon and we will sail tonight.

### Day 3 - Syracuse.

Syracuse was founded by the Greeks in 734 B.C and by the 5th century was a political and military power throughout the Mediterranean which rivalled Athens as the largest and most beautiful city in the Greek world. We will visit the Neapolis Archaeological Park to discover the well-preserved Greek theatre with seats carved from limestone. Paradise Quarry, now an attractive garden and orange grove, was the primary source of that limestone and is the site of the curious Dionysus Ear - a vast grotto with an amplifying resonance. Our guided tour will continue with an orientation walk in the old quarter of the town on the island of Ortigia where we will see the Temple of Apollo, considered to be Sicily's most ancient Doric temple and the Baroque cathedral which was erected over the remains of the Temple of Minerva. Return to the Sea Explorer for lunch and

enjoy a leisurely afternoon ashore exploring independently from our central berth. This evening we will transfer to the beautiful Palazzo Beneventano, a stunning private 18th century palace, located in the central square near the cathedral where we will enjoy a concert by the London Festival Opera.

### Day 4 - Taormina.

We drop anchor this morning off Giardini Naxos, the oldest Greek settlement in Sicily which dates from 735 B.C and which will be our base for our visit to Taormina, a walled town lying in the shadow of Mount Etna. Popular since the 19th century as a holiday resort it nevertheless has some truly impressive sites including the Greek Theatre from where there are marvellous views over the town and coast. After our guided tour you can choose to either return to the Sea Explorer for lunch followed by an afternoon at leisure in Giardini Naxos to explore the small town independently or remain in Taormina before joining our shuttle bus back to the vessel later in the afternoon. Please note that the vessel will be at anchor today and Zodiacs or local tenders will be used.

### Day 5 - Palermo.

Arrive this morning in the Sicilian capital of Palermo. After breakfast we will explore the city, famous for its jumbled and picturesque streets punctuated with ornate Baroque churches, domed Arab mosques and the glittering Byzantine mosaics that reveal a unique and diverse heritage. We visit the impressive 12th century cathedral which houses the royal tombs of Henri VI and Ruggiero as well as the recently restored Matorana Church with its stunning mosaics. Return to the Sea Explorer for lunch and this afternoon you can explore Palermo independently or join the guided excursion to see the remarkable Medieval mosaics in the cathedral at Monreale on the outskirts of the city.

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This evening we will enjoy a private concert with London Festival Opera in one of the city's beautiful palaces.

### Day 6 - Trapani.

Trapani was the landing point for Peter of Aragon in 1282 to start the Spanish occupation of Sicily and is our base for a morning of exploration today. Choose to either travel inland to Segesta which was one of the most important towns of western Sicily and one of the island's most magical ancient sites. Here we can see one of the grandest Doric monuments to survive, the unfinished temple dating from 424 B.C. which sits atop a hill with excellent views of the countryside and distant coastline. Alternatively, travel to the nearby town of Erice, famed in antiquity for its temple dedicated to the goddess of love, the Phoenician Astarte, Greek Aphrodite or Roman Venus. Our guided tour will take us to this stunning site high above the sea and to the beautifully preserved Medieval town. Return to the Sea Explorer for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at sea as we sail to Sardinia.

### Day 7 - Cagliari, Sardinia.

This morning there will be a guided walking tour of Cagliari, an ancient city which dates back to the Phoenicians and Romans. Rome left its mark in the grandiose amphitheatre, with its auditorium hewn out of the rock, Pisa left the splendid 13th century Elephant Tower and the Tower of San Pancrazio and the Aragonese and the Spaniards gave the town its walls, ramparts and fine buildings. Enjoy a stroll around the old town with its narrow streets running along a steep hillside and see the terraced Piazza del Palazzo and the 14th century Cathedral of St Cecilia. After lunch, either relax onboard, return for free time in Cagliari or join an excursion which will take us inland to Sardinia where we enjoy a wine tasting at one of the local

vineyards accompanied by traditional Sardinian bread, meats and cheeses. Tonight after dinner enjoy an onboard concert with London Festival Opera as we set sail.

### Day 8 - Olbia.

Day at leisure. Sail this evening.

### Day 9 - Alghero.

The Medieval city of Alghero was colonised by the Catalans in the 14th century and even today there is a strong Catalan identity throughout the town and it is often even referred to as Barceloneta. This attractive port will be our base for a day of exploration in the region. This morning's panoramic drive takes us to Nuraghe Palmavera. The main tower of the Nuraghe, which still has its dome shaped ceiling, dates back to 1100 years B.C. The complex, which was abandoned in the 5th century B.C., due to fire shows the different phases of social life and political organisation of the tribal community. We return to Alghero for lunch onboard and this afternoon is free to explore the town independently. Enjoy a walk through the Medieval streets or along the city walls, visit the archaeological museum or simply relax in a cafe.

### Day 10 - Port Mahon, Menorca.

After a leisurely morning at sea we arrive into Menorca, the most northerly of the Balearics and the least dedicated to tourism. The island of Menorca offers pastoral countryside, historic towns and superb beaches. On our afternoon tour we will see the mysterious rock mounds (talayots) and megalithic stone monuments which were erected some 4000 years ago before making our way to aristocratic Ciudadella, the architectural showpiece of Menorca. Situated at the head of a long channel from the sea, the city has had its share of disputes over

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sovereignty, and its character reflects the influence of Moorish, Turkish and Spanish rule. Return to the Sea Explorer and sail during dinner.

### Day 11 - Tarragona, Spain.

During the second Punic War in 218AD Tarraco was established as a garrison which developed into the main military base for the Roman army in Spain. Today we can still see remnants of the Roman period as we explore the city by foot. See the impressive walls that once surrounded the city, the 2nd century amphitheatre and the Roman Circus where chariot races would be held. Meanwhile on the outskirts of the town we will see the Pont de les Ferreres, a Roman bridge that formed part of the aqueduct that brought water to the city from the Francoli River. After lunch onboard enjoy an afternoon to explore independently, wander the Medieval streets see the cathedral and the Chapel of St Paul or maybe visit one of the many museums. Alternatively join the excursion to visit the Moestir de Poblet, a UNESCO World Heritage site on the road to Lleida. We will enjoy a guided tour of the monastery and also spend some time in the museum which features artefacts from the regions past.

### Day 12 - Valencia.

Spend the day in Spains third largest city. The Valencia of today owes much to the early Moors who occupied the region. It is their irrigation system that insures Valencias fertility and also began the cultivation of oranges which has remained the mainstay of the regions agriculture. Valencia is a vibrant, somewhat chaotic and typically Spanish city. This morning we will take a walking tour to see some of the fine Baroque buildings including the cathedral, the 15th century Gothic Silk Exchange and the old La Carmen quarter. This afternoon you

can join the shuttle buses to explore the city further at your own pace, you may wish to visit the Fine Arts Museum or maybe the Colegio del Patriarca with its wonderful Renaissance courtyard and church and a museum with works including a Last Supper by Ribalta. Alternatively this region is renowned as the home of paella and we will take a journey to Albufera, situated 10 kilometres south of Valencia. We will enjoy a boat tour on the lake before visiting a local restaurant to learn about cooking paella and enjoying a tasting.

### Day 13 - Cartagena.

Arrive this morning in Spains main naval port of Cartagena. Enter the deep natural harbour through two fortified rocky headlands for a morning of exploration in a historic city that dates back to the Phoenicians. The city walls remained intact until the 20th century, creating a dense historic centre. Take the lift or walk up to Concepcio Castle for amazing views of the city and harbour, view the Roman amphitheatre and the archaeological site of Molinete where work continues to uncover the Roman city. Return to the Sea Explorer for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at sea.

### Day 14 - Gibraltar.

Arrive during breakfast into Gibraltar where we have the day to explore this strategic British outpost of the Mediterranean. We will use the cable car to climb the 426 metre Rock of Gibraltar offering breath-taking views of the Costa del Sol, the city below and out towards the African coastline. At the top we enjoy a private lecture which will bring the history of Gibraltar to life. We will visit the Great Siege Tunnels, a labyrinth of tunnels built to defend Gibraltar from Spanish and French attacks between 1779 and 1783 and revered as one of the finest defensive systems. Also visit the Gibraltar Museum where we will learn

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more about the Great Seige, the geological origins of the rock and also the natural history including bird migrations and the marine life along the shore. Our day will conclude with a private concert at St Michaels Cave, situated within the rock itself and providing wonderful acoustics.

### Day 15 - Casablanca, Morocco.

This morning we arrive in North Africa and will offer a choice of options. Choose from a day in Casablanca where a morning drive takes in the cities most important sights, including the Notre Dame Cathedral and the Olive Market. The highlight of our tour, however, is a visit to the Hassan II Mosque, the largest religious monument in the world after Mecca. It took the work of 3300 traditional Moroccan artisans to create the beautiful mosaics, marble floors and the splendid wood ceilings. The mosque also features the worlds tallest minaret, soaring 200 metres above the city. Return to the ship for lunch and a free afternoon to explore further before the ship sails this evening. Alternatively join an overnight trip to Marrakech. Leaving the Sea Explorer after breakfast we will drive inland to the red city and during our time there we will see the rich monuments of this second imperial city including the Koutoubia minaret, a symbol of the city for 800 years, the Bahia palace with its lovely courtyards, late Moorish architecture and the Saadian Tombs including the royal pavilion. We will also have time to wander in the souks, visit the Jemaa El Fna square and the Marjorelle Gardens and enjoy some meals in local restaurants before returning to the vessel in Safi on day nine.

### Day 16 - Safi for Essaouira.

From the port of Safi we head along the coast to Essaouira. Founded in the 18th century, Essaouira was built to be a rival city to Agadir. Formerly known as Mogador, meaning small

fortress, it was designed as a fortified town surrounded by Vauban-style ramparts and played a major role as an international trading seaport, linking Morocco and sub-Saharan Africa with Europe and the rest of the world. On our full day tour we will see the amazing mixture of Portuguese and Berber architecture, the 16th century sea bastions built to protect the city, the 18th century Medina and in the Mellah we find the souks dedicated to gold, spices and fish. We will then enjoy a seafood lunch near the beach before returning to the Sea Explorer. Those who chose to join the overnight excursion to Marrakech will return to the ship this evening.

### Day 17 - At sea.

Enjoy a day to relax as we cruise over to Madeira.

### Day 18 - Funchal, Madeira to London

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

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## YOUR SHIP: HEBRIDEAN SKY

**YOUR SHIP:** Hebridean Sky

**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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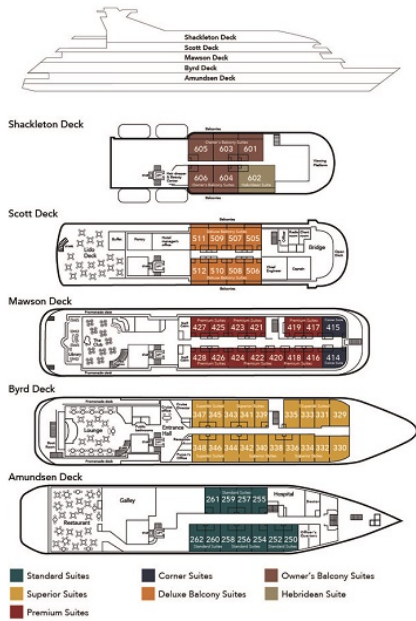
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## INSIDE YOUR SHIP



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