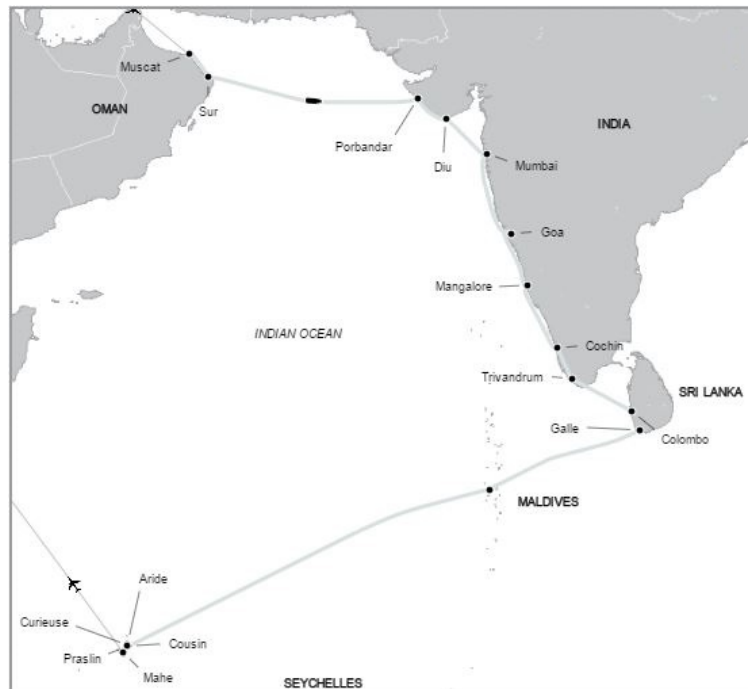




MUSCAT TO MAHE

For those looking for something a little different, this voyage from Muscat to Mahe offers a wonderful opportunity to explore in some depth a region which has fascinated travellers for centuries and some places which have thankfully been mostly neglected by the tourism world. After two days of exploration in the Arabian Gulf, you can enjoy a relaxing day at sea as we head for Indian shores, our journey mirroring countless past voyages of Arab dhows that have sailed from all points of Arabia to India, trading spices, materials and all manner of luxurious and exotic goods. We explore some fascinating places in the state of Gujarat, places which are off the well-trodden tourist path and difficult to explore independently including Porbandar from where you can choose to visit the Gir National Park with its diverse wildlife and the former Portuguese island of Diu. Continuing along the Indian coast we call into Mumbai where we have allowed for an overnight stay given all there is to see and experience in the energetic city. In contrast to bustling Mumbai we will moor overnight for a two day visit in Cochin, an ancient city of islands which has for centuries attracted traders and adventurers from Europe and the Orient and where we will spend time in the serene backwaters of Kerala. Our next port of call is Trivandrum before a final relaxing afternoon is spent onboard crossing to Sri Lanka in preparation for the second part of our trip amongst the islands and atolls of the Indian Ocean. The Maldives and the Seychelles are two of the worlds most pristine and picturesque archipelagos. With our purpose built Zodiacs we will land on otherwise inaccessible beaches, explore vast lagoons and coral reefs and encounter some extraordinarily beautiful tropical scenery. Our small ship is ideal for such a

region, allowing us to enjoy the peace and tranquility of this paradise. After all, it would be disappointing to find yourself in the company of hundreds on what was a deserted beach. From the luxury of the MS Island Sky, we can enjoy great food, good company and an expert team which makes travellers cruise on her time and time again. Combination Cruise This voyage is a combination of two shorter journeys on Island Sky "In the Wake of the Dhows" and "Sri Lanka to the Seychelles" you may have to change your cabin on day 15, this will be advised at the time



of booking.



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ITINERARY

Day 1 - Muscat, Oman.

Embark MS Island Sky. Enjoy a welcome drink before settling into your cabin. Moor overnight.

Day 2 - Muscat.

We have a choice of excursions today in Muscat. Choose to spend time exploring the city including the Grand Mosque, Muttrah Souk and the fascinating Bait al Zubair Museum situated in a converted townhouse and which exhibits Omani Heritage with photos, traditional handicrafts and furniture. We also pass the Sultans Palace Al Alam which is flanked by two 16th century Portuguese forts. Alternatively on a full day excursion we will drive inland past Omani landscapes to see some of the most impressive forts in Oman. We will start in the sultanate of Nizwa, Omans ancient capital where we find the 17th century fort which has a unique 40 metre tall round tower. We will continue to Jabrin Castle built in 1675 as a centre of learning for astrology, medicine and Islamic Law.

Day 3 - Sur.

The port of Sur has been on seafarers maps for centuries, as both an important port and historic shipbuilding centre. Dhows built here traded and plundered the East African coastline and islands of the Indian Ocean. Today, it is a quiet and picturesque town with a peaceful air. All along the coast fishermen land their catches of swordfish and tuna. Our tour will take us to a dhow yard where vessels are still made without a plan or blueprint as well as the fish market and the impressive restored Sineslah Fort where you can enjoy views over the town and coastline. Please note we will be at anchor today and will use the vessels Zodiacs.

Day 4 - At sea.

A relaxing day spent onboard as we sail to India.

Day 5 - Porbandar, India.

After a morning at sea we arrive in India in the state of Gujarat which is well off the usual tourist route. Porbandar was a thriving port during the Mughal period before being taken by the Portuguese in the 16th century. Today it is better known as the birthplace of Mahatma Ghandi in 1869. After clearing through Indian immigration we will explore this vibrant bustling town. Discover Kirti Mandir, the family house where Ghandi was born and enjoy a tuk tuk ride to visit the Hindu temple dedicated to Sudama, a friend of Lord Krishna. Return to the ship in the late afternoon and moor overnight.

Day 6 - Porbandar.

For our second day in Porbandar we have a choice of excursions. The keen birders can enjoy time at the Gosabara Wetlands Bird Sanctuary on the citys outskirts which offers a breath taking view of large flocks of flamingos, Dalmatian and Demoiselle pelicans, cranes, pintails and various other duck varieties. Gosabara has recorded 225 different varieties of birds in the area, a large number of them migrating during the winter months and attracted to the flooded marshlands in the region. You may prefer a full day tour to Junagadh, an ancient fortified city at the base of the holy Girnar Hill. We will explore the stronghold of Uparkot Fort which contains the Jama Masjid Mosque and offers wonderful views to the hill behind. The fort area dates back to the Gupta and Mauryan empires but rose to prominence in the Rajput and Sultanate eras of the 9th- 15th centuries AD. Discover the Buddhist caves dating back to Ashokas era, see the exterior of the resplendent Mahabat Maqbara Mausoleum and visit Durbar Hall of the 19th century Junagadh rulers. Alternatively choose an optional overnight



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excursion to Gir National Park, home to the Asiatic Lion and one of the oldest protected areas in India. As well as the lions which in the 2015 census numbered 523, the park is home to diverse animal and bird life. The sambar, the largest Indian deer, as well as the Nilgal antelope can be seen along with langur monkeys and 250 different bird species, look out for the Asian Paradise flycatcher and black hooded Oriol. A selected area of the park is open to visitors on organised safaris and your tracker will try to spot well camouflaged birds and mammals as well as the Asiatic Lion. Those joining the overnight excursion will disembark in Porbandar on day 6 and drive four hours inland to Gir. Enjoy a late afternoon and morning safari before returning to the vessel in the afternoon of day 7 in Diu (three hour drive).

Day 7 - Diu.

Our final call in Gujarat is the former Portuguese island colony of Diu, the first landing point of the Parsis who fled from Persia. The island, just 13 kilometres long by 3 kilometres wide was an important trading post from the 14th to 16th centuries when the Ottoman Turks controlled the shipping routes in the Arabian Sea and before being ceded to the Portuguese in 1535. Diu was a Portuguese colony from 1531-1961 and is now part of the Union Territories. The relaxed atmosphere and tranquil streets reflect its colonial history and contrasts with other Indian towns. Enjoy a morning exploring the impressive coastal Portuguese fort, the Baroque church of St Paul and the colourful morning market. After lunch onboard maybe return out to one of the local beaches or wander the quiet streets of Diu old town. Those who have taken the excursion to Gir National Park will return to Diu this afternoon. Sail this evening. Please note we will be at anchor today and will use the vessels Zodiacs.

Days 8 & 9 - Mumbai.

Awake this morning in Mumbai, a cluster of seven islands which were first home to the Koli fisherman, who still occupy parts of the city shoreline today. Mumbai was derived from Mumba the name of the Hindu goddess Mumbadevi and Aai Mother in the local Marathi language. First ceded to Portuguese, the British Government took possession of the islands in 1665 before leasing them to the English East India Company who founded the port and saw the city grow in size and importance. Over the next day and a half we will explore the city and surroundings. On a city tour we will drive past the prominent landmarks of the city visiting the Gateway of India, Mani Bhavan, the former residence of Mahatma Gandhi when he stayed in Mumbai from 1917 to 1934, Iskon Krishna Temple and Dhobi Ghat where we can observe the vast open air Indian laundry. We will travel to Gharapuri Island, better known as Elephanta Island and view the remarkable caves designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This labyrinth of cave temples feature courtyards, shrines, remarkable statues and vibrant sculptures that date from the 5th to 7th century AD. Finally we experience the sights and sounds of everyday Mumbai life as we head to Churchgate station and watch the famous Dabbawalas known for their accurate delivery of lunch boxes to thousands of people residing in the suburbs of Mumbai and coming to work in the city. It is a highly specialised trade that is over a century old and which has become integral to Mumbai's culture. We will sail on the afternoon of day 9 and enjoy an afternoon cruising to Goa.

Day 10 - Goa.

In the 15th century Goa was the largest trading centre on India's west coast and when the Portuguese arrived in the early 16th century it was their plan to set up a colony to seize the control of the spice trade. Goa remained a Portuguese colony until 1961



when she became the 25th state of the Indian Republic. Whilst famous for her beautiful beaches Goa offers wonderful architecture with a mixture of Hindu and Catholic styles, unique history, rich culture and pretty natural scenery. On our tour we will explore Old Goa with its fine Basilica of Bom Jesus and the neo classical Church of St Cajetan before continuing to a spice plantation where the cultivation of cardamom, chilli, cloves and coriander can be seen. We will enjoy the smells and tastes whilst we learn about their uses in Indian life.

Day 11 - Mangalore.

In the 14th and 15th centuries Mangalore traded with Persian and Arab merchants and was fought over by the Nayaka princes and the Portuguese. In the 18th century its control was contested by Haidar Ali and his son Tipu Sultan on the one hand, and the British on the other. The influences of its turbulent history are still apparent in the cosmopolitan attitude and diverse religions that exist here. Today it is a business and commercial centre and is India's ninth largest cargo handling port exporting 75% of the country's coffee and the bulk of its cashew nuts and spices. We will learn about the cashew processing industry, visit Gokarnath Temple and the remarkable St. Aloysius Chapel, with a fascinating series of intricate paintings that cover virtually every square inch of the interior ceiling and walls. Created over a period of two years by Brother Antonio Moscheni, an Italian artist, the chapel with its magnificent art work is one of the city's hidden gems.

Days 12 & 13 - Cochin.

Cochin is an extraordinary city with strong influences of Portuguese, Chinese, Arab, Dutch and British cultures still much in evidence today. We have two full days to enjoy this intriguing Malabar port. Visits will include the serene Kerala backwaters at

Alleppey where we will board a local boat for a cruise past colonial warehouses and coconut thatched houses. We will have time in Cochin to explore the curious mix of cultures and religions that together, with its strong trading past in spices and silks, make a fascinating city. Discover Mattancherry Palace with its ornately decorated rooms including some marvellous ancient murals. We see the oldest European church in India, St Francis and the ruins of the fort. We will also spend time in a local village discovering traditional crafts and enjoy a short tuk tuk ride. On our first evening as we moor overnight also enjoy a Kathakali performance onboard after dinner. Based on the subject from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and stories from Saiva literature, Kathakali is one of the main forms of classical dance drama of India and indigenous to Kerala.

Day 14 - Trivandrum.

Our last call in India is the Keralan port of Trivandrum. Built over seven hills, the city of the sacred serpents retains some of old Kerala's ambience, with its pagoda shaped buildings, red-tiled roofs and narrow winding lanes. There is much to see here and on our morning excursion we will include the old fort area around the 260 year old Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy an afternoon cruising to Sri Lanka.

Day 15 - Colombo, Sri Lanka.

At leisure. Sail this evening.

Day 16 - Galle.

Awake this morning in colonial Galle. On a morning tour we will visit the 17th century Dutch Fort, the museum which is housed in an old Dutch house depicting life in the Dutch colony, wander the ramparts, see the lighthouse and enjoy some free time to



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walk the narrow streets lined with traditional houses and browse for lace and local handicrafts. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a free afternoon. Shuttle buses will take you back to Galle or you may prefer to visit a local beach.

Day 17 - At sea.

Enjoy Christmas Day onboard as we sail across the Laccadive Sea towards the Maldives.

Days 18 to 22 - Maldives.

We have scheduled four days to explore the whole archipelago. This vast area of ocean is scattered with staggeringly beautiful dots of land surrounded by a cerulean sea. It offers some of the finest lagoons, beaches and coral reefs in the world. With nearly 1200 islands spread over 90,000 square kilometres we have plenty of choice and our day to day schedule will be left in the capable hands of the captain and expedition leader. We hope to include visits to Meenu Atoll, Baa Atoll and Haaalifu Atoll. Our Expedition staff will be on hand to take guided walking tours to explore the birds and wildlife on land whilst our snorkel master will take us to reefs to find coral and marine life. On our last day after a morning at Addu Atol we will clear customs and start our journey towards the Seychelles.

Days 23 to 25 - At sea.

Relax and enjoy our days at sea. Watch the bird and marine life and listen to the intriguing talks by our expedition team. We are assured of warm weather so make the most of the fresh air, get lost in a novel from your deck chair and enjoy all the comforts of the MS Island Sky. We will also enjoy a New Years Eve celebration during our time cruising.

Day 26 - Praslin & Curieuse, Seychelles.

Our first call in the Seychelles will be Praslin where we will explore the Vallee de Mai, the last remnant of the original high-canopied Seychelles palm forest and home to the coco de mer. We will walk its paths looking out for the rare black parrot and enjoying its natural beauty which so overpowered General Gordon. Sail over lunch to Curieuse a rugged island which was once home to a leper colony and now houses an eco-museum and visitors centre. The island is an important nesting site for Hawksbill turtles and boasts endemic vine and mangroves which we explore on an island walk.

Day 27 - Aride & Cousin.

Enjoy breakfast as we arrive in Aride, one of the finest and most important seabird islands in the Indian Ocean. Over one million seabirds breed on the island including tropical shearwater and roseate tern and also five species unique to the Seychelles such as the Seychelles warbler and Seychelles magpie robin. We will enjoy a guided walk on the island amongst the native woodland. Return to the ship for lunch and the short cruise to Cousin Island, situated off the coast of Praslin and since 1974 designated as a Special Reserve to protect her endemic land birds, including the Seychelles Fody and sunbird, and encourage breeding sea birds. Cousin is also one of the most important nesting sites in the Indian Ocean for Hawksbill turtles. We have the afternoon to explore the island on a series of guided walks. Sail over dinner to Mahe where we moor overnight.

Day 28 - Mahe

Disembark this morning.



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YOUR SHIP: ISLAND SKY

YOUR SHIP: Island Sky

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.

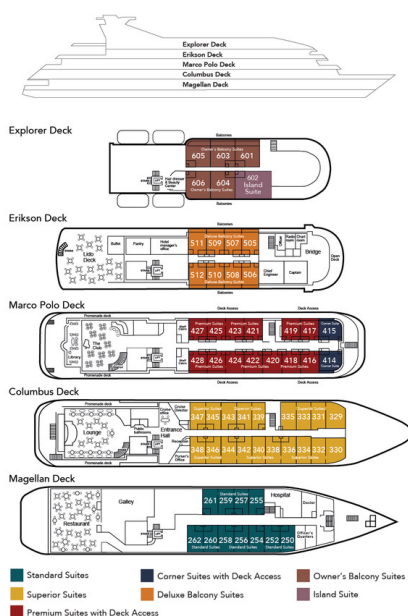
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