



The Small Cruise
Ship Collection

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FROM NEW CALEDONIA TO MICRONESIA WITH PONANT

Embark with PONANT on an all-new 17-day expedition cruise to the heart of remote islands in the Pacific. Aboard Le Soleal, you will follow a brand-new itinerary that will take you from New Caledonia to Guam to explore rich local cultures and exceptional underwater life. From Noumea, Le Soleal will first take you to the sublime island of Lifou with its picture-postcard landscapes of white-sand beaches and tropical vegetation, located in the Loyalty archipelago. Your cruise will continue to Vanuatu, often called the 'happiest country in the world', where its 83 islands showcase a palette of extremely varied landscapes. Espiritu Santo, the archipelago's main island, promises you an unforgettable aquatic experience in an idyllic setting. You will then set sail for the Solomon Islands where you will have the opportunity to witness traditional culture as well as enjoy stunning white-sand beaches with swimming and snorkelling. After a port of call in Papua New Guinea, the mysteries of Micronesia will reveal themselves to you. A scattering of islands and atolls, lost in the heart of the northern Pacific, this area is rich in Second World War history. The shores of Chuuk Lagoon and Pulap Island still retain traces of a tragic past and a declared Underwater Military Museum is the resting place of wrecks from Japan's military air and sea fleets. Micronesia consists of a sprinkling of islands and atolls that benefit from an exceptional environment. The atolls of Ifalik and Gaferut offer incredibly rich underwater scenery that promises unforgettable dives while, on land, Lamotrek Island has white sandy beaches and coconut trees, and villages that exude deep-rooted traditions. Your cruise will end in Guam, the biggest volcanic island of the Mariana Islands.

ITINERARY

Day 1 NOUMÉA

Perched on a peninsula between bays and hills, on the south-west coast of Grande Terre, Noumea enjoys a magnificent natural setting. The town shelters some exceptional biodiversity, thanks especially to the coastal mangroves. To feel the town's heartbeat, you can mosey in the place des Cocotiers, where Noumeans love to gather. The Tjibaou cultural centre unveils the secrets of the kanak culture. As for the Hagen castle or the maison Celieres, these are precious witnesses of a colonial past. But Noumea is also about sumptuous beaches.

Day 2 LIFOU

You'll land around 100km east of Grande-Terre. An ancient coral atoll atop a collapsed volcano, Lifou is today the largest and highest of the Loyalty Islands. This is an outstanding natural site, waiting to be explored: to the north, the coastline ends abruptly in sheer cliffs, while to the south lie expanses of long white sand beaches. Lovers of wild plantlife may well be tempted by a walk further inland, where the rich and authentic Kanak culture is proudly upheld by the local community.

Day 3 AT SEA

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot

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of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

Day 4 ESPIRITU SANTO ISLAND

At the end of the world, in the north of New Caledonia, lies Vanuatu, a little archipelago that subsists mainly from fishing and farming. It is composed of several islands, Espiritu Santo being the largest and one of the most beautiful. You can meet the people here who are very welcoming and who live in harmony with nature. Plus you will see unimaginable landscapes formed of volcanic rocks, as well as sandy beaches and lagoons beckoning you to dive into their of turquoise waters. You will be surprised to find, in the middle of dense vegetation, brackish water with an amazing ecosystem called "blue holes". If paradise exists, it must be here.

Day 5 AT SEA

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Day 6 SANTA ANA ISLAND

Owaraha (formerly Santa Ana) is located at the eastern end of Makira (San Cristobal) and just north of the smaller Owariki (Santa Catalina). Our ship will navigate through the picturesque channel separating the Islands before dropping anchor just outside Port Mary. The islanders are well known for preserving ancient traditions and producing intricate wooden carvings. Their artefacts include magnificently carved fishing floats and ceremonial bowls intricately inlaid with shells. After a short zodiac ride ashore you will be guided through the village to an open area to witness a number of traditional performances. Afterwards experience life in a traditional Solomon Island village or take a swim in the warm tropical waters of Port Mary.

Day 7 HONIARA, GUADALCANAL ISLAND

Honiara is the capital city of The Solomon Islands, administered as a provincial town on the north-western coast of Guadalcanal Island. Honiara comes from the local Ghari Language "naho-ni-ara" meaning 'facing the ara', the place where the southeast winds meet the land. Discover this city, its beautiful landscape, and the significant role it played in World War II. Particularly The Battle of Henderson Field, the last of the three major land offensives conducted by the Japanese in 1942.

Day 8 AT SEA

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Day 9 RABAUL, BISMARCK ARCHIPELAGO

Set at the eastern end of the island of New Britain, the tropical port town of Rabaul has always been famous for its spectacular setting. Nestled beside Simpson Harbour, the township is surrounded by six volcanoes, one of which, Mt Tavurvur, is still active today. The most recent major volcanic eruption was in September 1994 when Tavurvur and Vulcan covered much of Rabaul and surrounding villages with volcanic ash. This eruption saw the growth of the nearby coastal town of Kokopo which has now become the administrative and tourism centre for Rabaul. Join your expedition team for a tour by local transport to see Mt Tavurvur, the Volcano Observatory and various significant sites from World War II.

Days 10 - 11 AT SEA

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Day 12 CHUUK (EX TRUK)

Chuuk Lagoon, previously known as Truk Lagoon, is one of the four states of the Federated States of Micronesia. The 16 much-eroded volcanic islands within the lagoon have mangrove swamps along their coasts with rich rainforests in the central mountainous areas. The islands are hugely popular with scuba divers thanks to the incredibly interesting shipwrecks: at depths of 15 to 40 metres, divers can explore a veritable underwater museum of wrecks from the Japanese land-based, aerial and naval fleet bombarded by the Americans in February 1944 in retaliation for the attack on Pearl Harbour. These shipwrecks have become foundations for new reef growth and extraordinary marine fauna.

Day 13 PULAP ISLAND

Pulap is an atoll consisting of three islands located in the Pattiw group in the Caroline Islands. The three islands are, Pollap in the north, Tamatam in the south, and Fanadik at the western fringe of the reef. The island is surrounded by a number of ghostly shipwrecks that are virtually intact, submerged underwater. This makes for great diving expeditions where you can explore the reef and its incredible marine life as well as the shipwrecks.

Day 14 LAMOTREK ATOLL

Like a green piece of confetti floating in the middle of the Northern Pacific, the coral atoll of Lamotrek will appear before you like a dazzling gem set in a remarkable and stunning showcase. Belonging to the vast archipelago of the Caroline Islands, this small slice of paradise and its charming neighbours are home to one of the widest varieties of coral and tropical fish



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species in the world, making it an idyllic destination for marine life enthusiasts. Beyond the stretches of immaculate, white-sand beach, the dream continues. Off in the distance can be heard the captivating sounds of traditional songs sung by some 300 islanders who still live here, resonating in this unparalleled natural environment blending unspoiled vegetation and vast, heavenly ribbons of sand.

Day 15 IFALIK ATOLL

The Ifalik coral atoll, lying in the warm waters of the North Pacific, in the vast Caroline Island archipelago, is an invitation to serenity, enchantment and discovery. A veritable hidden paradise edged with magnificent beaches with expanses of fine sand, Ifalik will reveal its treasures to you. Between the sumptuous underwater scenery, rich biodiversity, ancestral traditions and warm and welcoming inhabitants, you will marvel at this lush environment, unlike anywhere else, and far from the frenzy of any town.

Day 16 GAFERUT ATOLL

Gaferut Atoll is an outlying atoll in the State of Yap in the Federated States of Micronesia. The tiny island is mostly defined by densely covered rolling hills which are lusciously covered with vegetation. Mangrove swamps line the vast majority of the shore with an outer barrier reef, rich in marine wildlife surrounding the island. There is an enclosed lagoon which too is brimming with a diverse selection of marine wildlife.

Day 17 GUAM

In the Western Pacific, you will call at Guam, the largest volcanic island of Micronesia and the Mariana Islands. Here, the crystal-clear waters and white sandy beaches create a picture-postcard setting, ideal for relaxation and a break from it

all. This little-known island, today under the administration of the United States, also offers you the opportunity to visit a number of historical sites, vestiges of Spanish colonisation, and to discover the culture of the Chamorros, the first inhabitants of the islands, talented craftspeople who have preserved their traditions.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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YOUR SHIP: LE SOLEAL

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Le Soleal

VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

Luxury Small Ship A sleek silhouette, a welcoming intimate atmosphere, and the same philosophy that has made her sister ships, L'Austral, Lyrial and Le Boreal, such a success. This magnificent yacht of only 132 staterooms and suites, all with balconies, has contemporary decor inspired by the luxury yachting world, with fluid lines and a modern colour scheme combining natural wood with shades of grey and white. White Corian counters in the lobby contrast with the warmth of leather to recall a boat's hull, while the central sculpture of enamelled pieces takes its inspiration from the sea. In the lounge bar, the carpet picks up a tennis stripe theme symbolising a certain idea of cruising, one synonymous with French elegance and a chic seaside spirit. Wheelchairs 3 specially adapted wheelchair cabins (Deck 3 = Superior cabin no. 307, no balcony, Deck 4 = Prestige Cabin no. 407 - with balcony and Deck 5 = Prestige Cabin no 509, with balcony) and lifts to all decks/areas. Read about our recent Ponant cruise to Antarctica Please click the following links to read more about Ponant and the other Ponant cruise ships.



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