PAPUA NEW GUINEA AND THE CORAL SEA

Delve deep into the South Pacific on this journey to remote hideaways in Papua New Guinea and Australia. Visit the prettiest town in the South Pacific. See the intricate weavings of the Murik Lakes people, and learn the World War II history of Horn Island. Get to know the beautiful beaches, crystalline lagoons and intriguing villages of Vainimo and much more.

ITINERARY

Day 1 Koror, Palau
Embark Silver Discoverer for this stunning expedition Papua New Guinea and the Coral Sea. This afternoon, you will be introduced to your Expedition Team and attend a safety briefing. Tonight we invite you to familiarise yourself with your new home away from home, meet some of your fellow travellers and enjoy the first of many memorable meals in The Restaurant.

Day 2 At Sea
Relax after your long journey towards Palau and Silver Discoverer. A Zodiac briefing will start our program, followed by a snorkel briefing and snorkel equipment distribution should you need some. Let our team of lecturers and naturalists...
prepare you for the different aspects of Papua New Guinea. Join them in the Explorer Lounge for presentations on local and European history of the area, and find out what makes New Guinea, the second largest island in the world, so special.

Day 3 At Sea
A leisurely day at sea to take advantage of the luxurious amenities aboard Silver Discoverer. Help our birdwatchers spot some of the seabirds found far away from their nesting grounds, or enjoy a lecture about the natural history of northern Papua New Guinea. An interesting book can be good company, too. Alternatively, just relax in the comfort of your suite and watch a movie on the in-suite interactive television.

Day 4 Vanimo, Papua New Guinea
This morning we arrive in Papua New Guinea. After completing the immigration formalities we will set out to explore one of Papua New Guinea's most remote regions. The Sandaun Province is relatively undeveloped, with lovely beaches, crystal clear lagoons and picturesque villages. Today we will witness the traditional Melanesian culture that is kept alive in simple villages. After a short welcome ceremony we will set off in local minivans to explore further afield. Don't forget your bathing suit as we will have the opportunity to cool down at one of the beautiful beach locations outside of town.

Day 5 Murik Lakes and Kopar Village, Sepik River, Papua New Guinea
The Murik Lakes are a cluster of salt and fresh-water lakes in the lower Sepik province of Papua New Guinea. Here, you will find lagoons, mangrove swamps and sandbanks between fresh water and the sea. This morning we will attempt to enter into the lake passages using our fleet of inflatable Zodias. On our Zodiac cruise (having entered the lakes) we will travel along extensive mangroves forests. At the small village of Karau a traditional Singsing will take place, with several groups singing and dancing almost simultaneously for photographers it is always a difficult choice which motive to capture first. Souvenirs will be offered, too. The locals do carvings and weave Sepik baskets, which are popular in all parts of Papua New Guinea. During lunch, Silver Discoverer will reposition to the Sepik River where we will navigate upriver for a scenic Zodiac tour that will include a stop at Kopar, a small village at the mouth of the Sepik River, inhabited by no more than 200 people. Our arrival here will also be heralded with a welcoming performance of song and dance. For the keen birders, a trip by Zodiac will offer sights of flood plain birds, parrots and the odd kite. During the night Silver Discoverer will pass active volcanoes and perhaps we will be able to see some volcanic activity.

Day 6 Madang, Papua New Guinea
Madang has one of the South Pacific's most beautiful harbours, with a backdrop of steep mountains and lush tropical vegetation. The town of Madang was the centre of heavy fighting during World War II, and there are 34 sunken ships at Hansa Bay for our divers to explore. The small town began its modern life as a result of the lucrative copra (coconut) trade. The wide avenues go back to the German administration of the late 19th century, and there even is a small European cemetery next to the local market. During today's tour, we will see the Coastwatchers Memorial Lighthouse, which was dedicated in 1959 to the Allied Forces and local civilians who served against the Japanese in WWII. We will also visit Bibbil Village, famous for its pottery, where our welcome by traditionally clad villagers performing local dances accompanied by drums is sure to delight. As dusk approaches keep an eye out for flying foxes that hang in the trees there are many of them in town.
Day 7 Tuam, Papua New Guinea
Tuam is an uplifted coral atoll covered in palm trees. The island is banana-shaped and its eastern side, where the only village is located, is highly exposed to the trade winds. As a result, the islanders have set up protective walls made out of palm-branches, which gives the village the look of a fortified castle from a distance. After the island officials greet us, we will proceed with our walk to the village. To get there from the landing-site one has to climb the highest part of the island: a full 12 feet! A trail marked by white sand leads to the settlement area of neatly organized wooden huts and houses with pandanus thatched roofs. Although Tuam is a small island, there might be about 4 or 5 dance groups performing a local Sing-Sing for our group. The Tuam islanders are Siassi people and experts at choreographing dances. Afterwards, take some time to admire the local artefacts that will be displayed for purchase. Among these, the Tami bowls are unique to the Morobe islands. Take a walk in the forest and look at the different gardens set up in the higher regions of the island. Following our village visit, we will enjoy exploring the spectacular reef and snorkelling from our Zodiacs together with our onboard marine biologist.

Day 8 Tufi, Papua New Guinea
Tufi, located on the south-eastern peninsula of Cape Nelson, in Oro Province, is situated on a tropical fjord (the work of ancient volcanic activities) and surrounded by uncharted coral reefs. Natives wear tapa cloth during traditional ceremonies, which is made from the bark of mulberry trees found in the local forest. Of course, dance figures predominantly in the culture, with performers sporting headdresses decked with Bird of Paradise plumes and other colourful feathers. Upon arrival, we will canoe along the smooth waters of the Kwapurina Fjord. With local villagers as our oarsmen, we will be guided under canopies of ancient mangrove forests, which are home to Tufi’s wide range of colourful birds and butterflies. Our destination is a small beach where we will disembark and proceed on foot through the rainforest to a small waterfall where we will be offered a refreshing coconut drink before watching a demonstration of traditional canoe making. Continuing on our journey, we return to the island where the villagers will traditionally welcome us with dance and song. There will also be an opportunity to observe the making of tapa cloth and to make souvenir purchases.

Day 9 Fergusson Island and Dobu Island, Papua New Guinea
Fergusson is one of the three biggest and mountainous islands in the Milne Bay Province. The other two are Normanby and Goodenough. Together, they form the D’Entrecasteaux Islands, which are famous for the DeiDei geysers natural hot springs that periodically erupt with vapour steam. The proud villagers will welcome us with ancestral tales and legends about this natural display of power. While here, we will also visit Dobu Island, which is one of the smaller islands of the D’Entrecasteaux archipelago. Historically, their neighbours feared the Dobu islanders because they were revered sorcerers, which is incidentally how the Dobu language became the common language throughout these islands, even though they are a small community of less than 1,000 inhabitants. Birdwatchers are in for a treat whilst visiting the D’Entrecasteaux Islands. Look out for white cockatoos, parrots and eagles and if we are very lucky we may even spot a bird of paradise (or two!).

Day 10 Samarai, Kwato and Deka Deka Island, Papua New Guinea
Samarai used to be Milne Bay Provinces capital until 1968 when administrators were moved to Alotau. The relocation was
necessary as the island was simply overcrowded. You will see the difference between our morning visit of Samarai and the afternoon visit to Deka Deka Island, and can imagine what it means to live off nature in the case of the less or even uninhabited islands and to be brought into the modern (in)conveniences of the 21st century and living in towns. We want to make use of densely forested Deka Dekas white sand beach and use this last afternoon in Papua New Guinea ashore for water-activities.

Day 11 At Sea
A leisurely day at sea is yours to enjoy. Begin perhaps with a late breakfast and another cup of coffee or tea during the first of the days lectures. Join the lectures and hear fascinating tales of the early explorers and the local culture. Famous navigators have traversed the Torres Strait among them Captain Cook and Lt. William Bligh. Learn more about the regions endemic wildlife and remarkable nature or get a first insight into the many facets of Australia. There will surely be a topic that will interest you.

Day 12 Thursday Island, Australia
Silver Discoverer will arrive around noon and once the clearance has taken place we will want to have a look at this former pearling centre at the top of Australia. The Kaurareg people are the traditional land owners and today Thursday Island (also known as Ti or Waiben (catfish) is the administrative and commercial centre of the Torres Strait Islands. Just 39 kilometres north of Cape York Thursday Island has an area of about 3.5 square kilometres. Populated for thousands of years by the Melanesian Torres Strait Islanders, Thursday Island has a population of 2,610 today. World War 2 arrived in Australia at the top end and your tour today allows you to embrace the ramifications for local Australians as you get the opportunity to visit the defence post at Horn Island. Take a private ferry to Horn Island and walk in the forgotten footsteps of the indigenous and non-indigenous soldiers who served in the area to experience an unmatched personal interaction with your specialist guides. On your journey you visit the original gun emplacements, an underground command post, slit trenches, a WW2 aircraft wreck with an unbelievable story, WW2 airstrip, dispersal bays and taxiways and listen to the eerie sound affects the airstrip provides today. The tour travels on actual WW2 roads and tracks laid down by the military. Local artists will discuss their art and stories with you as morning tea is served and you visit the Torres Strait Museum before your ferry returns you to Thursday Island.

Day 13 Stanley Island, Australia
Stanley Island, in the Flinders Group National Park in Princess Charlotte Bay, is part of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park and was declared a national park in 1939. Several spectacular rock art sites feature prominently on Stanley Island as the island is an integral part of the mythological complex of the Flinders Group. The best known is found at the huge Yintayin rock shelter known as the Ship rock shelter. The rock art apparently shows ships from a number of different nations, painted in red and white on the red sandstone: sailing ships rigged in the distinctive European lugger style or like the Macassan prau and a dugout canoe with a figure standing upright in it, hands outstretched. We will go ashore and have a closer look at these painting accompanied by a local, aboriginal guide.

Day 14 Lizard Island and Ribbon Reef, Australia
Found some 250 km north-east of Cairns, Lizard Island belongs to the Dingaal people, the traditional Aboriginal owners and we not only have to adhere to the rules of the National Park, but
also consider that the island has a special meaning to them. We will go ashore on the western side and can explore the island on foot or swim and snorkel. As part of a group of six high islands Lizard Island is located right in the middle of the Great Barrier Reef. Mangroves and sandy beaches are found along the shore and there is a track to Cooks Look (some 2 km). Lizard Island’s location promises that some great snorkel and dive opportunities await us here. A World Heritage Site since 1981 the Great Barrier Reef has more than 1500 fish species living on the Great Barrier Reef, 400 coral species and 215 bird species. Silver Discoverer will relocate during lunch to the Ribbon Reefs. The Ribbon Reefs form a line of some 50 miles of reefs, numbered from 1 to 10. Apart from giant sea fans and giant clams there is a wide variety of fish, including clownfish, Maori wrasse, moray eels, Whitetip reef sharks, trevally, cod, snapper, and batfish. Our on-board videographer will present his/her final cut of the voyage-DVD. You might already have forgotten some details but this is a good opportunity to review the many interesting and magical moments of the voyage.

Day 15 Cairns, Australia
Following breakfast, disembark Silver Discoverer.
YOUR SHIP: SILVER DISCOVERER

YOUR SHIP: Silver Discoverer
VESSEL TYPE: Luxury Expedition
LENGTH: 338 Feet/102.9 Metres
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 116 passengers
BUILT/REFURBISHED: 2016

Her small size and shallow draft allow close-up access to rugged coasts well beyond the reach of ordinary vessels. And she has been newly refurbished to help guests maximize their experience and build a genuine connection with the regions they visit.

Spacious decks and panoramic public rooms mean the drama of the unexpected is never far from view. A fleet of Zodiaks allows exploration from the water or remote landings anywhere nature or curiosity dictate. Since many of our expeditions sail to some of the world's most pristine coral reef systems, there's a glass-bottom boat for underwater viewing along with a full complement of snorkelling equipment and a dive programme for advanced divers.

We've also taken great care to assemble a truly outstanding Expedition Team, composed of experts in the culture, history and wild life of the destinations, to present informal talks, guide Zodiac outings and lead small-group explorations ashore.

While back on board, every creature comfort awaits: an ocean-view suite, in-suite bar and the head-to-toe pampering of a butler; elegant lounges and open bar where fellow travellers gather to swap tales about their day's adventures; and cuisine that meets high standards of culinary excellence -- which are lofty, indeed. Imaginative menus in The Restaurant feature both regional offerings and dishes inspired by Relais & Chateaux. Additional amenities include a sun-catching pool deck, an internet cafe, a fitness centre, and a beauty and massage centre -- particularly alluring after an adventurous day ashore.
INSIDE YOUR SHIP
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