



The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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SOUTH AFRICA, MADAGASCAR & THE SEYCHELLES CRUISE

Join us aboard the all-suite MS Island Sky and enjoy the warmth and beauty of the Indian Ocean as she undertakes exactly the type of itinerary that suits her many talents best. Our journey incorporates some fascinating and exotic calls combining Southern Africa's wildlife-rich KwaZulu-Natal with calls in Madagascar, the magnificent Aldabra Group and the stunning islands of the Seychelles. South Africa is one of the most beautiful and diverse countries on earth and our journey begins in its southeastern province of KwaZulu-Natal. Arriving in palm-fringed Durban we visit the scenic Midlands region before sailing to Richards Bay where we will visit the St Lucia Wetlands with its prolific birdlife and Hluhluwe-Imfolozi, Africa's oldest game reserve. A land of contrasts with extraordinary wildlife and mountainscapes contrasting with flat, dry savannahs, modern skyscrapers and traditional Zulu culture, Kwazulu-Natal surpasses expectations. Following a relaxing two days at sea we arrive in Madagascar, the world's 'eighth continent', where we have five days to explore this extraordinary country. The term 'unique' is often an overused description in the travel world but certainly applies to the island of Madagascar where the animals, plants, landscapes and people that make up this thousand-mile-long island are unlike anywhere else in the world. The final part of our adventure is dedicated to the Seychelles and some of the most idyllic islands in the world. Amongst the highlights of our time here will be the Aldabra Islands, the last breeding ground of the giant tortoise, and in addition to seeing some of these endearing creatures we should also encounter dolphins, turtles and whales as well as countless birds. To explore the abundant crystal clear waters of the vast lagoon and

to set foot on atolls which have never been exploited by the hand of man is a rare experience. This itinerary is a veritable feast of beauty and the natural world and with the vessel's fleet of Zodiac landing craft we will land on remote beaches and during our expedition will experience walking through verdant rainforest and national parks, snorkelling in crystal clear waters and getting close to some unique flora and fauna. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by our expert crew and officers who, along with our expedition team of marine biologists, ornithologists and botanists have many years of experience in the

Indian Ocean.

ITINERARY

Day 1 London or Manchester to Durban, South Africa.
Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

Day 2 Durban.
Arrive today and transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is free to relax in the hotel or explore independently.

Day 3 Durban.
Durban is the capital of KwaZulu-Natal and a blend of diverse cultures from Asia, Africa and Europe making it one of the most cosmopolitan towns in South Africa. We head inland this morning to the Midlands and the area famed as the capture site of Nelson Mandela on the 5th of August 1962. Our guide will provide us with the history of his arrest before we have time to



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explore the museum and monument erected to commemorate this event. Afterwards we will continue to the Howick Falls, a picturesque 100 metre waterfall known to the Zulu people as KwaNogqaza, Place of the Tall One. After lunch we transfer to the MS Island Sky moored in Durban and sail this evening.

Day 4 Richards Bay.

Set up as a makeshift harbour, during the Anglo-Zulu War in 1879, Richards Bay has flourished into one of the main ports of South Africa. Leaving the port we drive north to the Narrows of the St Lucia Estuary which forms part of the iSimangaliso Wetland Park World Heritage Site. Upon arrival in St Lucia town, we join a boat ride on the lake which is dotted with marshy, sandbank islands that are home to thousands of birds. Over 526 bird species can be found in the St Lucia Wetlands Reserve. The echo of the fish eagle's haunting cry can be heard while you view the basking and nesting sites of the Nile crocodile and the hundreds of hippos that make their homes in the estuary; the greatest occurrence of both crocodile and hippo in Southern Africa. After our visit choose to return to the ship or continue to Hluhluwe-Imfolozi, the oldest game reserve in all of Africa. Set in the heart of KwaZulu-Natal, the park extends itself over 96,000 hectares, has an immense variety of flora and fauna and is hugely popular not only for its "Big Five" but for the vast birdlife with more than 300 species existing within the reserve. As the home of Operation Rhino in the 1950s and 1960s, the park became world renowned for its white rhino conservation. In addition to rhino, the reserve has a spectacular variety of bird and animal life, including elephant, lion, leopard, buffalo, blue wildebeest, zebra, giraffe, cheetah, mountain reedbeek, kudu and warthog.

Days 5 & 6 At Sea.

Spend two days at sea as we cross the Mozambique Channel sailing towards Madagascar. Spend time listening to the informative lectures and spotting wildlife from the outer decks.

Day 7 Tulear, Madagascar.

Our first call in Madagascar will be in Tulear where we offer a choice of morning tours. Maybe choose to visit the Antsokay Arboretum which is entirely devoted to conserving the plants from the southwest of Madagascar. After more than 30 years of hard work, it 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 that contains a spiny forest which is unique to southeastern 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. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch as we sail this afternoon.

Day 8 Morondava.

From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, the capital of the Menabe region, 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. This morning we will explore Zazamalala Forest, a protected area that is home to a number of species of lemurs, birds, reptiles and plants, and also the base for a breeding centre for critically endangered species of turtles and tortoises. It was initially set up in 2000 as a reforestation project to promote sustainable use of the forest. We will then head to the Avenue des Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the world, six are endemic to Madagascar and here we will marvel at the

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majestic Granddier's baobabs, a couple of dozen of which form a natural avenue. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance, as well as have the opportunity to contribute to local reforestation efforts by planting a young baobab ourselves. Alternatively, join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest (subject to road conditions at time of visit). 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 include many endemic species. Here we find three species of baobab, and many birds and reptiles including snakes, tortoises and lizards. Eight species of lemur reside here including the pale form marked lemur.

Day 9 At Sea.

Our lecture programme resumes as we continue our journey along the Madagascan coast.

Day 10 Mahajanga.

Mahajanga is a major port in northwest Madagascar situated on the Betsiboka River and is our base for a full day tour of the surrounding area. We will commence with a drive to Lake Mangatsa, a sacred site of many legends where we will learn about local traditions as we search for lemurs, chameleons and birds in the trees. Lunch will be served at the Antsanitia Resort, set in 22 hectares of grounds and located on a stunning section of coastline. There will be an opportunity to swim or enjoy a walk along the beach, see the local fishing boats and visit the village before we return to the MS Island Sky.

Day 11 Nosy Tanihely.

Arrive mid-morning at the Nosy Tanihely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island that 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, explore the island where we may see the resident lemurs, skinks, fruit bats and hermit crabs and enjoy fantastic views from the 1908 lighthouse on the island's highest point.

Day 12 Nosy Hara.

Our final call in Madagascar will be off the northwestern coast where we will find a number of strangely shaped limestone islets that dot the aquamarine 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 or alternatively join a Zodiac cruise around the islands with a chance to snorkel over the coral.

Days 13 & 14 Aldabra Islands, Seychelles.

Arriving in the Seychelles we have a day and a half at the Aldabra Group of islands and our itinerary will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain who will monitor the local conditions to ensure we maximise our time here. Whilst our itinerary is flexible, we plan to clear immigration formalities on Assumption. The island was ruthlessly plundered for its vast deposits of guano in the early 20th century but peace has returned and the wildlife of rare birds and green turtles are once again in abundance. Our time here will be spent beachcombing, on a nature walk or snorkelling. We also plan to spend a day at Aldabra, the island referred to by Sir Julian Huxley as "One of nature's treasures and should belong to the whole world". Aldabra is unique and every time we call at what is believed to

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be the world's largest atoll we find something new of interest. Sightings have been made of the extremely rare white-throated rail and the atoll is also home to the world's second largest colony of frigate birds and the largest crab, the coconut crab. Whilst exploring by Zodiac it is difficult to know in which direction to look. The clear blue seas abound with colourful life, the skies are alive with varied birdlife and ashore giant land tortoises forage as they have done for millions of years. We will explore Picard Island with a short walk to see some of the thousands of tortoises and numerous robber crabs. We will include as much as possible during our time on Aldabra making landings on South Island and trips into the lagoon, a vast 17 mile stretch of shallow clear water. From our Zodiacs we can watch the everchanging undersea world and snorkel in colourful coral waters teeming with marine life.

Day 15 At Sea.

Relax on board as we make our way towards the Alphonse Islands.

Day 16 Alphonse Islands.

There are three islands in the Alphonse group and as we approach them you will understand why they are regarded by many to be the most beautiful of the 115 islands in the Seychelles archipelago. Our plan is to spend a morning on the tiny and idyllic island of Bijoutier which, rarely visited, is a haven for a variety of seabirds. There will be the opportunity to swim and we hope to offer a snorkel platform in the crystal clear waters. Bijoutier sits between two larger atolls so the ocean current flows passing Bijoutier replenish the coral reefs and make them especially rich in biodiversity.

Day 17 Aride & Curieuse.

Early this morning we arrive at the Inner Seychelles and hope to anchor off 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, lesser noddy, frigatebirds and roseate tern and also five species unique to the Seychelles such as the Seychelles warbler and Seychelles magpie robin. The island is largely covered in native woodland including the endemic Wright's gardenia, a shrub with beautifully scented flowers found nowhere else in the world. Sail over lunch to Curieuse, a rugged island that was once home to a leper colony and now houses an eco-museum and visitor 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 18 Mahe to London or Manchester.

Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London or Manchester. Arrive this afternoon.

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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YOUR SHIP: ISLAND SKY

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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.

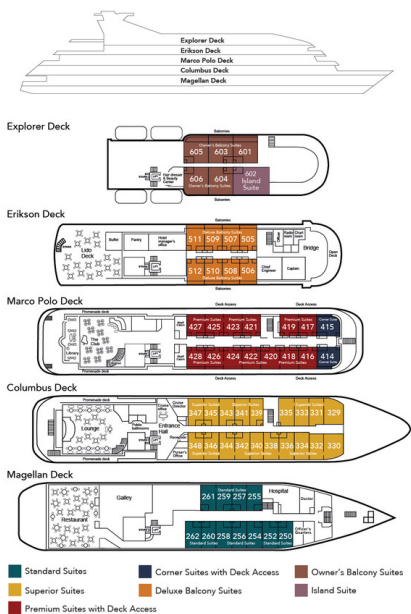
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