

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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SPRING IN THE GARDENS OF THE MEDITERRANEAN

Our journey begins in the endlessly fascinating city of Istanbul from where we weave our way across the Aegean enjoying the bountiful spring season when wildflowers cover the island hillsides and pepper the romantic ancient sites. Leaving the Aegean we enter the Ionian Sea exploring the islands of Kefalonia and Corfu before crossing to the heel of Italy and on to Sicily. Here, we explore historic eastern Sicily's ancient sites and lovely gardens prior to sailing the Straits of Messina and out into the Tyrrhenian Sea. The region of Campania in Southern Italy is a delight and a visit to the charming Island of Ischia is not to be missed. The itinerary has been planned for those who appreciate an interesting mix of history, gardens and landscapes. We will steer clear, whenever possible, of the over-crowded sites and mega resort ships, yet include some of the most interesting and beautiful places in the ancient world. It is the most perfect time of year: verdant gardens and landscapes awash with blossoms make for an idyllic journey aboard the wonderfully comfortable MS Island Sky. Ship to Shore: Please note that we will be at anchor in Delos, Chania and Agropoli and the vessels Zodiacs will be used to travel ashore. This includes flights from/to London - if you wish to make your own way independently to/from the ship and not use the group flights, there is a reduction of GBP320 per person off the listed prices.



ITINERARY

Day 1 - London to Istanbul, Turkey.

Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Island Sky. Sail in the early evening.

Day 2 - Canakkale.

Today we call at Canakkale, our gateway for Troy, where ongoing archaeological excavations have revealed nine different layers of cities superimposed in rings on a massive mound rising above the Plain of Ilium. It was to one of these cities, as legend has it, that the Greeks fought the Trojans as told by Homer in the Iliad. Our tour follows the excavations made by Heinrich Schliemann, the archaeologist who discovered Troy and Priam's Treasure, the jewels that, Schliemann claimed, were worn by Helen of Troy.

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We will walk the walls that held Helen of Troy and look down at the plain where Achilles dragged the dead body of Hector. Alternatively there will be an excursion to the Gallipoli Peninsula to see the World War I memorials which commemorate the famous battle of Gallipoli. Taking the local ferry over to the peninsula we will visit Anzac Cove and Lone Pine Cemetery.

Day 3 - Delos & Tinos, Greece.

This morning visit Delos, which though the smallest of the Cyclades, was once the political and religious centre for the whole Aegean. Birthplace of Apollo and Artemis, it boasted an oracle second only to that of Delphi. Explore the magnificent archaeological site including the marble sanctuary of Apollo. During lunch sail for Tinos one of the most beautiful islands in the Cyclades located between Andros and Mykonos. According to mythology, Tinos was the home of Aeolus, the God of the winds. Today we will enjoy a scenic drive amongst the spring landscape and through the picturesque villages visiting the Kechrovouni Convent and the Venetian castle at Xomburgo before returning to the famous Church of Panagia which is home to the icon of the Virgin Mary that draws pilgrims to the island.

Day 4 - Sifnos & Folegandros.

This corner of the Cyclades is far from the routes of the big ships. After breakfast we will go ashore on the little known island of Sifnos with its traditional white houses, picturesque churches and narrow lanes and alleys. Our morning tour will include Apollonia, the islands tiny capital, the Virysianni Monastery and the village of Kastro, a delightful place to wander and admire the traditional architecture. Over lunch we sail to the little known island of Folegandros. Explore at leisure the clifftop capital of Chora, a wonderfully picturesque village with alleys lined with bougainvillea and hibiscus and a dramatic seascape

over an edge which drops some 700 feet directly into the Aegean.

Day 5 - Chania.

Step ashore this morning on Crete and the pretty village of Chania. We will drive to the nearby Botanical Park and Gardens. Situated on a hillside, this vast garden suffered badly with the terrible fires of 2003 although looking across this green oasis it is difficult to believe it suffered such devastation. Numerous paths wind their way through areas devoted to aromatic herbs, citrus orchards, tropical gardens, vineyards and endemic plants of Crete. In the afternoon explore at leisure the town of Chania, one Crete's loveliest towns with its picturesque Venetian harbour - a wonderful place to unwind. Maybe visit the archaeological museum, set in a 16th century Venetian church or find a taverna to watch the world go by.

Day 6 - Olympia.

After a morning at sea we arrive in Katakolon, our base for an afternoon excursion to Olympia. Pastoral and lush, Olympias plentiful ruins are shaded by Aleppo pines and olive trees. The fame of Olympia rests upon the Olympic Games. During the celebrations that accompanied the Games, competitors, while not forgetting that they were Athenians, Spartans or from other city states, remembered that they were Greeks and regarded an Olympic victory as the highest honour. We will see the gymnasium, the stadium and the palestra or wrestling school. Discover the Altis, or sacred precinct of Zeus, which houses structures including the Temple of Zeus, one of the largest temples on the Greek mainland.

Day 7 - Kefalonia.



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Made famous by the filming of Captain Corellis Mandolin this Ionian island has great charm. We will visit the capital Argostoli and see the famous lighthouse before driving to the nearby Botanical Gardens which were founded in 1998 to display and preserve the wild and endemic plants of the island. We continue to Mount Ainos National Park, renowned for its dense forest of Kefalonian Fir trees but also endemic flowers. On a guided walk we will learn about the efforts made to protect the trees whilst searching for orchids and other wildflowers. We return to the MS Island Sky for lunch. This afternoon enjoy free time in Argostoli or alternatively join an excursion to one of the local vineyards for a tasting of the excellent Robala wines.

Day 8 - Corfu.

Our last call in Greece will be the cricket playing island of Corfu which Homer referred to as a beautiful and rich land. A morning guided tour will include the famous Byzantine Monastery of the Virgin at Paleokastritsa which is still inhabited by a community of monks. The small museum houses some priceless Byzantine icons. Spend some time in the serene monastery gardens that afford a splendid view over the turquoise waters of the bay. This afternoon visit Mon Repos Palace, the summer residence of the British Governors of Corfu which now houses a museum including many Ionian treasures and surrounded by a large park. Our tour will continue with a drive past orange and lemon groves for our visit to Achilleion Palace, built by the Empress Elizabeth of Austria in the 1890 and later owned by Kaiser Wilhelm II. Explore the palace and gardens adorned with statues and enjoy the spectacular view over the Corfu countryside.

Day 9 - Gallipoli for Lecce, Italy.

Often referred to as the Florence of Southern Italy because of its wealth of architectural treasures, Lecce's Roman heritage is

evident in the amphitheatre which was built to accommodate 20,000 spectators. Our tour today will include the sumptuously decorated Santa Croce Basilica and the impressive Piazza Duomo. Later this morning a private visit to Palazzo Tamborino-Cezzi, a privately owned 15th century palace has been arranged. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at sea as we sail to Sicily.

Day 10 - Syracuse, Sicily.

This city once rivalled Athens as the largest and most beautiful city in the Greek world. Our tour will begin in the Archaeological Zone and include the well preserved Greek theatre. Paradise quarry is now an attractive garden and orange grove but was the primary source of limestone and the site is famous for the curious Dionysus Ear, a vast grotto with an amplifying resonance. After lunch onboard we drive along the coast to the sixty hectare property of the Marquess of San Giuliano at Villasmundo for a private visit. Here we will find a stunning garden that surrounds the late 15th century fortified farm house. During May the garden will be at its best. See the Arabian Garden, Tropical and Mediterranean Gardens and enjoy time wandering through this stunning garden which owes much to the head gardener, Rachel Lamb.

Day 11 - Taormina & Stromboli.

From the nearby port of Messina we will visit Taormina, a walled town lying in the shadow of Mount Etna. Popular since the 19th century as a holiday resort it nevertheless has some impressive sites including the Greek Theatre from where there are marvellous views over the town and coast. Also see the magnificent Piazza del Duomo, a World Heritage Site, St Agatas Cathedral and the imposing 13th century Castello Ursino. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail for the island of Stromboli, one



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of the most active volcanoes in the world with regular eruptions. We sail past this Lighthouse of the Mediterranean on our way to Campania.

Day 12 - Agropoli.

Today we return to mainland Italy and the area known as Campania. It is a green and fertile area and famous for the production of buffalo mozzarella. The small port of Agropoli is a convenient location for our morning excursion to Paestum. Founded by the Greeks in 600 BC this well preserved and fascinating site was rediscovered in 1752. On our half day tour we will see the impressive Temple Poseidon, the Basilica, Amphitheatre and Aethenian before spending some time in the museum, adjacent to the site. Return to the ship for lunch and choose to either enjoy an afternoon at leisure in this small historic town or join us as we visit a buffalo mozzarella farm, seeing the production of the cheese and sampling some of the final produce.

Day 13 - Pompeii & Amalfi Coast.

From our berth at Castellamare di Stabia we have a choice of excursions today. Either choose to visit Pompeii and walk the streets of the ancient Roman city which was destroyed by the eruption of Mount Vesuvius in AD79 or alternatively enjoy a drive to the marvellous Amalfi Coast, stopping in Ravello where we will visit the magnificent Villa Cimbrone garden. Transformed in the early 20th century by Lord Grimthorpe and Vita Sackville-West it is an essentially English style garden but with amazing views of the Amalfi Coast. A visit will also be made to Villa Rufolo which it is said inspired Wagner in his composition of Parsifal and has a garden referred to as Garden of the soul.

Day 14 - Naples.

Arrive this morning in Naples and see the Norman castle that protects the port and the backdrop of Vesuvius in the distance. We have a choice of activities today as you may choose to spend the day on the garden island of Ischia. We will travel to the island by ferry from Naples and on arrival on the island our focus will be La Mortella, a wonderful garden designed by architect Russell Page for Lord and Lady William Walton. Divided into two parts called the Valley and Upper Garden, the areas are linked by a network of paths and inviting walks from where you can enjoy the breath-taking views of the Bay of Forio. Spread over two hectares there are fountains, ponds, streams and scattered everywhere are water loving plants. We will have lunch in a local restaurant before enjoying free time to explore the main town. Alternatively enjoy a day in Naples where a morning tour will take us to Herculaneum. This wealthy Roman town was completely submerged by volcanic mud following the AD79 eruption of Vesuvius. Since its rediscovery in 1709, excavations have revealed beautiful public baths, villas and gardens of noble families, decorated with murals and floor mosaics, and the remains of a theatre. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a free afternoon in Naples.

Day 15 - Naples to London.

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

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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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PRICING



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