TAHITI TO EASTER ISLAND

For many, Polynesia is the very definition of paradise; evoking classic images of palm-fanned beaches, azure lagoons, and exotic, flower-bedecked islanders. Begin in legendary Tahiti and continue east for a Marquesas tour, admiring their sky-piercing volcanoes, lushly-carpeted canyons, and chiseled bays. The low-lying Tuamotu Archipelago, whose remote atolls—mere rings of coral dotted by tiny islets enclosing aquamarine lagoons—offer some of the world’s most dazzling snorkeling and diving. Step ashore on seldom-visited Pitcairn, witness the amazing bird life of uninhabited Henderson and Ducie Islands, and conclude your adventure with an Easter Island tour. This voyage offers a comprehensive blend of Polynesia’s natural and cultural splendors, backdropped by dreamy, postcard-perfect scenery.

ITINERARY

Day 1: Papeete, Tahiti
Make your way to Papeete where you will join your fellow travellers and stay overnight in the hotel.

Day 2: Papeete / Embark Caledonian Sky
Relax during a morning at leisure, then join a tour of Papeete, the capital of French Polynesia’s largest island. Pass by orchards of papaya as you drive along the stunning coast. Visit the renowned Gauguin Museum to learn about the life of the artist in the islands and the Museum of Tahiti, which traces the islands’ history. Embark the Caledonian Sky this evening.

Day 3: Rangiroa, Tuamotu Islands
Though remote and sparsely populated, the far-flung Tuamotus comprise the world’s largest atoll chain. These venerable coral constructions rise just high enough above the water to be called land, and if it weren’t for their waving coconut palms, they might
be entirely invisible from any distance. Step ashore on Rangiroa this afternoon, whose name translates into “vast sky.” The largest atoll in the Tuamotus, more than 400 motu—low-lying islets and sandbars—sit atop a ring of coral through which at least 100 channels flow. The dazzling lagoon is hailed as one of the world’s greatest dive destinations, and whether snorkeling or diving, you will be rewarded with unparalleled underwater vistas. Birders watch for blue lorikeets, red-footed boobies, and great frigatebirds, while a beach walk takes you to Tiputa village to meet locals who demonstrate energetic traditional dances.

Day 4: At Sea
Attend informative lectures today as the Caledonian Sky cruises toward the legendary Marquesas Islands.

Day 5-7: Marquesas Islands
Considered one of the most beautiful island groups in the South Pacific, the Marquesas lie farther from a continental coast than any other islands in the world. Unlike other Polynesian islands, the Marquesas have no surrounding reefs or placid lagoons. Their wide, deep bays are havens for vessels such as yours. Spend three days exploring this dazzling collection of islands whose breathtaking vertical peaks reach into the clouds, while carpets of lush tropical vegetation drape cliffs and canyons that descend to sea-sculpted bays. Countless sooty, fairy, and bridled terns circle tiny, rocky pinnacle islets. Zodiacs bring you ashore on a variety of islands, to be greeted on some by dancers and drummers adored in leis and tapa cloth, and welcomed to others by the blowing of large conch shells—the traditional pu greeting. On walks you may see petroglyphs or tiki figures—representing deified ancestors—flanked by banyan trees, fragrant plumeria, blooming orchids, and silvery waterfalls. Open-air craft markets display baskets, shell jewelry, and wooden carvings. Birders search for the endemic Nuku Hiva pigeon and Marquesan swiftlet. Though the islands lack fringing reefs, snorkelers and divers will discover many colorful fish against a backdrop of sheer walls and dramatic arches covered in soft corals.

Day 8: Puka Puka, Tuamotu Islands
Delightful music and dancing welcome you to this idyllic island—the first land sighted in the Pacific by Europeans. Visit the small village whose residents raise taro, bananas, and coconut palms for copra (dried coconut.) Birders search for Pacific golden plover while snorkelers and divers explore the fringing reef. Today, conditions permitting, explore one of the many uninhabited Tuamotu Islands and enjoy swimming, snorkeling, or diving.

Day 9: Puka Rua
Coconut palms and breadfruit trees cover the beautiful islets that surround Puka Rua’s lagoon. Garland-bedecked dancers greet you in the tiny village whose 150 hospitable inhabitants earn a living selling copra. Witness the process of coconut drying, enjoy a local crafts market, or stroll along the lagoon shores watching crested terns circling overhead. Spend the afternoon exploring this lovely atoll’s underwater wonders.

Day 10: Expedition Stop (TBC)

Day 11: Mangareva, Gambier Islands

Day 12: Oeno, Pitcairn Islands

Day 13: Pitcairn
Remote, enchanting, and tiny at six miles around, volcano-crowned Pitcairn was the fabled hideout of the HMS Bounty mutineers in 1790. Step ashore and visit with the 50 hospitable inhabitants of Adamstown, who are the direct descendants of the nine mutineers and 18 Polynesians. The anchor of the Bounty rests beside the courthouse and the ship’s Bible resides in the church. After your island visit, the warm and inviting waters are perfect for a swim, snorkel, or dive.

Day 14: Henderson
Sheer limestone cliffs surround this elevated coralline island, a World Heritage Site, pockmarked by caves and blowholes. Henderson’s astounding natural selection has produced ten endemic flowering plants and four endemic species of land birds, including the Henderson Island crake and Stephen’s lorikeet. In the afternoon, snorkel or dive in the marine-life-rich waters.

Day 15: Ducie
This small, uninhabited, and rarely-visited atoll is rimmed in white sand beaches that in turn surround a crystalline lagoon. As you walk along the shore, witness a vast variety of seabirds—tens of thousands nest here, including Murphy’s and Phoenix petrels, masked boobies, frigatebirds, and red-tailed tropicbirds. Underwater forays bring you face-to-face with legions of rainbow-hued fish in the warm, clear waters.

Day 16-17: At Sea

Day 17-18: Easter Island
Your full-day tour begins with a visit to the ceremonial center of Ahu Vinapu where the monolithic stonework is reminiscent of the Inca civilization in Peru, contrib- ing to the theory of contact between the islanders and South America. Continue to Tahai for your fi rst look at the intriguing stone heads, moai, built on massive stone platforms. View nearly 400 monolithic statues in various states of completion at the spectacular volcanic tu quarries. At Ahu Tongariki visit the largest ceremonial site in Polynesia—a fi ve-year archaeological restoration project was completed in 1996. Then drive to the Rano Kau volcano to view the giant caldera, its sprawling fl oor dotted with lakes. The ceremonial village of Orongo, dedicated to the fascinating “birdman” cult was built on the rim of this crater and you may explore the old houses and rock walls carved with hundreds of petroglyphs.

Day 19: Easter Island / Disembark
After breakfast disembark the Caledonian Sky and enjoy a short tour before heading to the airport for your onward flight.
YOUR SHIP: CALEDONIAN SKY ZE

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VESSEL TYPE: Luxury Expedition
LENGTH: 90 metres
PASSENGER CAPACITY: 114 (in 57 suites)
BUILT/REFURBISHED: 1991 / refurbished 2012

The MS Caledonian Sky accommodates a maximum of 114 passengers in 57 spacious outside suites. Many have walk-in wardrobes and some feature tub baths. There will be seven categories of suites and sixteen suites will have private balconies. For those familiar with the MS Island Sky she will feel like a second home, although there are some differences. The dining room, lounge, Lido Deck and bar are all similar. However, the ‘Club’ on the MS Caledonian Sky has been transported to the very top deck. Here, there is a library and bar which leads out on to a lovely forward deck. The ‘Club’ has wonderful views with ceiling to floor windows. If you like the MS Island Sky, we are sure you will also approve of her sister. And, of course it is important that we offer the very best of facilities. However, equally as important are the staff on board whether they are the vessel’s crew or our own expedition staff. Noble Caledonia’s reputation has been built on providing the very best in all areas. Their crew of 74 not only offer an excellent service they are also noted for their kindness and attention to detail. A well run ship with a warm atmosphere is what we are known for, and it is because most of our crew have been with us for many years that we are able to engender such an atmosphere. Your Suite Onboard there are 57 exceptionally spacious and well designed suites. The passenger accommodation is arranged over four decks and all suites have outside views. All feature a sitting room area and some have private balconies. Each affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring a country style wash basin, hot towel rack and vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower and/or bath tub. Facilities in the suites also include walk-in or spacious wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool or desk, mini-fridge, flat screen television, telephone, programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted toiletries, air-conditioning and heating. Bottled water, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. 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. In addition there is the Club Lounge on the Panoramic Deck which features a bar. The onboard travel 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. Outside there is a rear Lido deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. On the top deck there is a further observation and sun deck with bar service and comfortable deck furniture for sun bathing or relaxing with a book. There is also a small gymnasium onboard and hairdressers with appointments made on request.

Your dining With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the quality of cuisine will be of a consistent superior quality. Where possible and when it meets his high standards, our accomplished 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. In the main elegant dining room, breakfast is served buffet-style, with certain items cooked to order and lunch and dinner is à la carte. When weather permits, breakfast, a buffet-style lunch and dinner are also served on deck. To enhance your dining experience even further a selection of wines are included with lunch and dinner. Afternoon tea is served in the lounge and tea and coffee are available 24 hours. With sufficient notice, most diets can be catered for on board.

For your comfort, safety and security The vessel is equipped with the latest safety, navigation and communications equipment along with roll stabilisers to minimise the ship’s motion. The Captain and officers operate an open-bridge policy that allows passengers onto the bridge at most times with the exception of arrival and departure from port and during times of complicated navigation. Here you can check the ship’s progress by charts and learn more from the officers about your journey. There is also a dedicated channel on your television in your suite showing the routing of the vessel along with technical information and estimated times of arrival and departure from port. On board you will also find a clinic and doctor and a lift that serves all decks. Smoking on board is restricted to outside decks only.

Gratuities Unlike many other cruise vessels, onboard the MS Caledonian Sky you do not need to worry about tipping staff as we have included them in your holiday price. In addition we tip all their guides and drivers along the way, thereby taking away the hassle of always having to remember to have some small change with you.
INSIDE YOUR SHIP