

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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VOYAGE TO BYZANTIUM - SAIL FROM VALLETTA TO ISTANBUL

From Valletta's Grand Harbour to the Golden Horn on the shores of the Bosphorus, this unique voyage aboard the 100-passenger MS Hebridean Sky traces the ancient highways of the Mediterranean and Aegean, linking together the great civilisations of antiquity. We will explore some of the ancient world's most fascinating sites, spend time on some charming Aegean islands and witness some beautiful landscapes. Our journey is perfectly timed to take advantage of the gentle temperatures and for us to witness the coast and islands at their springtime best before the crowds of summer arrive. Embarking the all-suite MS Hebridean Sky in Malta, the crossroads of the Mediterranean, we sail to Sicily for our visit to Piazza Armerina and the Imperial Roman Villa of Casale with its stunning floor mosaics. Continuing around the Sicilian coast we call into Syracuse for our exploration of the Neapolis Archaeological Park or the Baroque town of Noto which reveals the island's rich cultural heritage. After a leisurely day at sea crossing the Ionian Sea to Greece, we will discover Olympia, birthplace of the Olympic Games followed by a visit to the remarkable site of Delphi and a transit of the Corinth Canal. As we continue through the Aegean, we will visit islands and ports imbued with mythology and maritime tradition. From the elegant Neoclassical architecture of Syros and the extraordinary monasteries of Meteora to the Byzantine splendours of Thessaloniki and Lemnos, an island steeped in mythology. Our voyage concludes amid the legendary landscapes of the Dardanelles and the fabled city of Troy before we arrive in the captivating city of Istanbul where there is the option to extend your time with our two night hotel extension. Our itinerary has been carefully

designed to combine some 'must see' sites together with some smaller places that are totally unsuitable for vessels larger than ours and in addition to our guided excursions, we have also included time at leisure for individual exploration enabling you to soak up the atmosphere at your own pace. We have the added benefit of excellent local guides and our knowledgeable Guest Speaker who will add much to your experience and knowledge of this



fascinating region.

ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Valletta, Malta.

Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky and enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we moor overnight.

Day 2 Valletta.

There will be a choice of tours this morning. You may wish to visit Mdina which was originally given the name of 'Citta Nobile', and it is now known as the 'Silent City' at the heart of the island.

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Mdina is Phoenician in origin and was the fortified capital of the island before the arrival of the Knights. During our walking tour we will discover various architectural styles, including Sicilian-Norman palaces and impressive Baroque buildings of great historical significance. Alternatively, visit the Ghar Dalam Cave and Museum, one of Malta's most important prehistoric sites. The cave is renowned for its rich fossil deposits, including remains of animals that lived on the island over 500,000 years ago, and provides valuable insight into the earliest human presence in Malta. Afterwards, drive to the 18th century Palazzo Parisio in Naxxar which is celebrated for its lavish interiors, intricate stucco work, gilded ceilings and elegant ballrooms. Our visit will also include a tour of the palace's ornate gardens, beautifully landscaped with fountains, statues and fragrant orange trees. After lunch on board, the afternoon is free to explore the city of Valletta independently.

Day 3 Licata for Piazza Armerina, Sicily.

Arriving at the Sicilian port of Licata we travel inland to what is regarded as the finest Roman site in Sicily, the Imperial Roman Villa of Casale, which is located close to Piazza Armerina amidst wooded rolling countryside. This huge villa was built in the 3rd century and has some stunning floor mosaics. Our return drive takes us through the province of Caltanissetta, recognised today as one of the best winemaking regions in Italy thanks above all to its production of high quality, prestigious red wines including Nero D'Avola. We will break our journey at one of these vineyards and enjoy a chance to sample some wine over a Sicilian lunch before we return to the MS Hebridean Sky.

Day 4 Syracuse.

Syracuse was founded by the Greeks in 734 BC and by the 5th century was a political and military power throughout the

Mediterranean which rivalled Athens as the largest and most beautiful city in the Greek world. This morning we visit the Neapolis Archaeological Park where we will find a well preserved Greek theatre with seats carved from limestone. Paradise Quarry, now an attractive garden and orange grove, was the primary source of that limestone and is the site of the curious 'Ear of Dionysius' a vast grotto with an amplifying resonance. Alternatively, visit the Baroque village of Noto. Built in 1703 Noto is a picturesque city located on the terraced slopes of Mount Iblei among olive groves and almond trees. A guided walk along the central streets will reveal the 18th century Palazzo Ducezio and some Baroque churches. Enjoy a leisurely afternoon to explore Syracuse independently before we meet this evening for a private concert in one of the town's palazzos accompanied by local food and wine.

Day 5 At Sea.

Spend a relaxing day on board as we sail across the Ionian Sea to Greece.

Day 6 Katakolon for Olympia, Greece.

Arrive in Greece at the port of Katakolon, our base for our excursion to Olympia where the 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. We will also explore the Altis, or sacred precinct of Zeus, which houses structures including the Temple of Zeus, one of the largest temples on the Greek mainland and the Archaeological Museum which houses some



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fine sculptures and artefacts from the site. Afterwards, we will enjoy Easter lunch in a local restaurant before returning to the ship and sailing this evening.

Day 7 Itea & Corinth Canal.

The port of Itea is our gateway to the sacred site of Delphi, one of Greece's most important sites of antiquity. The hillside ruins here are exceptional and we will explore the Sanctuary of Apollo, the site of the sacred Delphic Oracle and walk along Delphi's Sacred Way, visiting the Treasury of the Athenians and the 5,000 seat theatre dating from the 4th century BC. Alternatively, visit the 12th century Monastery of Ossios Loukas, where more of the original decoration survives than in any other church in Greece. The mosaics and frescoes in the Great Church are among the finest in Greece. On the return journey to the MS Hebridean Sky we can enjoy the diverse landscape with wooded green slopes, hills with pines and the sacred valley with olive trees. Enjoy lunch on board and a leisurely afternoon at sea ensuring you are on deck in the early evening as we navigate the narrow Corinth Canal. Completed in 1893 and only 6.4 kilometres long and 21.5 metres wide, it is only small ships like the MS Hebridean Sky which can now make this journey.

Day 8 Syros.

Syros was the largest cultural and trade centre of the Aegean in the 19th century and the capital Ermoupolis was Greece's principal port. Enjoy a leisurely morning with a stroll in the town of Ermoupoli, the capital of the Cyclades. The prosperity of the island in the 19th and early 20th centuries created through commerce and shipping is reflected in the architecture with a beautiful square, town hall and theatre. We will sail over lunch and have an afternoon at sea.

Day 9 Volos for Meteora.

Arrive today in Volos, the starting point of the expedition of Jason and the Argonauts from Greek Mythology, located in the Pagasetic Gulf at the foot of Mount Pelion. Leaving the port we will head through the fertile plains of Thessaly towards Meteora ("monasteries in midair"), one of the most extraordinary sights in Greece and in all of Europe. Rising from Thessaly's valley are gigantic rocks on top of which are monasteries built by hermits some 600 years ago and which are now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Over time, 24 monasteries were built on the hilltops, producing a surreal sight that combines a spectacular natural landscape with human ingenuity. Inside the monasteries we will see the beautiful icons and frescoes on the walls and appreciate the intricate mosaics and Medieval manuscripts. After lunch in a local restaurant we will return to Volos. Alternatively join the Pelion Train which was constructed between 1894 and 1903 and which ascends the beautiful slopes of the mountain to the historic village of Milea. Commencing in Ano Lechonia we will view verdant slopes, dense vegetation of plane trees and oaks, arched bridges and tunnels as we climb. On arrival in Milea we will walk along the cobbled paths to the centre of the village where we find the 18th century church, the folklore museum and one of the oldest libraries in Greece. Return to the MS Hebridean Sky for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at leisure in Volos, perhaps taking a walk along the pedestrianised seaside promenade, the Argonauts Way.

Day 10 Thessaloniki.

Since its foundation by King Cassander of Macedonia in 315 BC and named after his wife, stepsister of Alexander the Great, Thessaloniki has always been a metropolis. The long history of the city is evident in the varied architectural forms from the



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Hellenistic era up to the end of the 20th century as well as an astonishing Byzantine artistic heritage. This morning we explore the city seeing the White Tower, the symbol of the city, the Galerious Arch, the Rotunda, St Dimitrios Church, the Citadel and the City Walls, from where you will have a marvellous view of the city and the Thermaic Gulf with Mount Olympus in the background. Alternatively drive to the Vergina Royal Tombs Museum which displays the superb, decorated facades of the temple-like tombs of King Philip II and a young prince (thought to be Alexander IV), the treasures found within them and a reconstruction of the Great Mound that originally marked the site of the Royal Tombs. The tombs were discovered in 1977-78 by the archaeologist Manolis Andronikos and until that time they were covered by a protective tumulus 13 metres high and 110 metres across. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at leisure to explore the city at your own pace.

Day 11 Lemnos.

Awake in Myrina, the small capital of Lemnos, an island steeped in mythology being the domain of the Greek god Hephaestus, the god of fire and metalworking, who fell on Lemnos when his father, Zeus, threw him from Mount Olympus. A morning tour will cross the island to the archaeological site of Hephaistia, one of the island's principal cities in Antiquity and an important religious centre. We can see the ruins of the ancient baths, theatre and palace as well as the sanctuary devoted to the Great Goddess of Lemnos. Spend the afternoon at leisure in pretty Myrina, known for its romantic castle built over the rocky promontory. Maybe explore the castle or the picturesque Romeikos Gialos, which is lined with charming Neoclassical houses one of which contains the Archaeological Museum.

Day 12 Canakkale, Turkey.

Arrive in Turkey at the port of Canakkale, our base for a choice of excursions today. Maybe visit the ancient city of 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 at one of these cities, as legend has it, that the Greeks fought the Trojans as told by Homer in the Iliad. We will walk the walls that held Helen of Troy and look down at the plain where Achilles dragged the dead body of Hector. We can also visit the onsite Troy Museum. Alternatively, there will be an excursion to the Gallipoli Peninsula to see the World War I memorials which commemorate the Gallipoli campaign. It was here in 1915 that allied troops, mainly from Australia and New Zealand, landed intending to quickly defeat the Ottomans and facilitate ships to pass through the Dardanelles to capture Istanbul. However, the landings were contained by the Ottoman troops and trench warfare soon took hold leading to thousands of deaths. We will visit the memorials at Anzac Cove and Chunuk Bair. Return to the MS Hebridean Sky and spend a final relaxing afternoon at sea as we cruise through the Dardanelles Strait.

Day 13 Istanbul to London.

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

Please note:

Itineraries are subject to change.

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VESSEL TYPE:

LENGTH:

PASSENGER CAPACITY:

BUILT/REFURBISHED:

Hebridean Sky has always been known for its effortless elegance, impeccable service and atmosphere of charm and camaraderie. Now we add increased adventure options and an on-site Passenger Service Representative. Hebridean Sky is the perfect blend of luxury and adventurous exploration. Is it a luxury ship? An adventure ship? It's both! The vessel underwent a multi-million pound refurbishment in Sweden in Spring 2016.

ONBOARD DINING Great expeditions require great food! We are pleased to offer daily changing breakfast, lunch and dinner menus with an emphasis on providing well balanced and nutritional cuisine. Our team of international chefs has boat loads of creativity and you are sure to experience a variety of interesting dishes throughout your voyage. The restaurant is located on Deck 2 and our service team looks forward to providing a memorable dining experience.

IMPECCABLE SMALL-SHIP AMENITIES Returning from excursions, passengers enjoy complimentary refreshments, afternoon tea and all-day coffee in The Club, a gracious space for relaxation, surrounded by panoramic windows. Other Sea Explorer features include: Library with Internet access Lounge with audiovisual facilities Dining room Wraparound sun deck with Jacuzzi Exercise room

Medical facilities with available doctor Elevator serving all passenger decks Swimming/zodiac platform All Voyages Include: Up to Two Pre-Voyage Hotel Nights Complimentary Wine or Beer with Dinner Certified Emergency MD and Clinic World Class Cuisine Live Entertainment Complimentary Coffee/Tea station Voyage Photographer Dedicated Passenger Service Manager Complimentary Expedition Jacket Please note deck



plan may vary.

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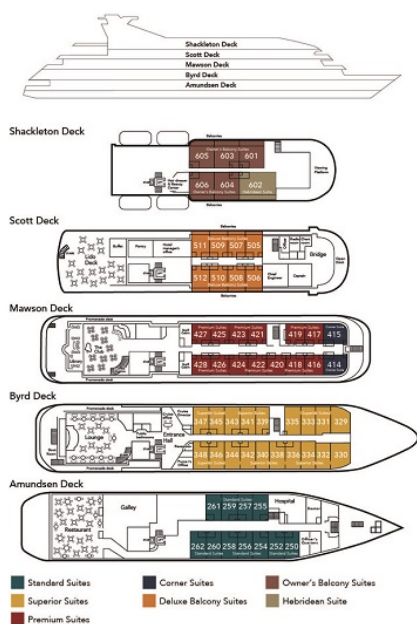
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12-Apr-2028 to 24-Apr-2028

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