

## The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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## WONDERS OF MADAGASCAR

The term 'unique' is an often overused description in the travel world but certainly applies to the island of Madagascar. The animals, plants, landscapes and people that make up this thousand mile long island are unlike anywhere else in the world. This extraordinary country long remained obscure as a destination and is still relatively unknown amongst even the most serious of travellers. There is minimal infrastructure in many parts of the island and for those wishing to explore the island in some depth, doing so by small ship, especially one as well-suited as the MS Serenissima is far preferable to exploring by any other means. Our small ship, with her fleet of Zodiacs for forays ashore allows us access to wonderful places denied to larger ships and with our onboard experts you can learn about and enjoy encounters with fabulous endemic wildlife in this immensely rich and timeless corner of the Indian Ocean. In addition to the breathtaking scenery, the area abounds with strange and wonderful plants and trees, countless varieties of birds and abundant wildlife including the iconic lemur. The long separation from the African mainland has given rise to its amazing number of unique species of flora and fauna and its people are also unique having descended from Malay-Polynesian mariners who sailed from South East Asia between 1500 to 2000 years ago. Later arrivals included slaves from Africa, traders from Arabia, India and Portugal and more latterly French colonials. Our experienced expedition team will provide commentary on all that we see and will reveal the wonders of this immensely rich and timeless corner of the world.



### ITINERARY

Day 1 - London to Mauritius.

Fly by scheduled flight.

Day 2 - Mauritius.

Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the Tamassa Resort for an overnight stay. The rest of the day is free to enjoy the hotel facilities before we meet for dinner in the hotel this evening.

Day 3 - Mauritius.

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Enjoy breakfast in the hotel and a morning at leisure. After checking out we will take an island tour including the Trou-aux-Cerfs volcano, the Grand Bassin Lake and Black River Gorges before transferring to the MS Serenissima in the late afternoon. Enjoy Welcome Drinks and Dinner as we sail tonight.

### Day 4 - Reunion.

We arrive at breakfast in Reunion where we have a choice of excursions. On a full day tour we will visit the central highlands where spectacularly rugged peaks of dormant or extinct volcanoes cradle huge amphitheatres known as cirques, where mountains tower to over 10,000 feet and beautiful waterfalls plummet hundreds of feet. The rich soil and mellow climate produce a lush and verdant landscape which is dotted with villages and towns with a uniquely French atmosphere. Fields of sugar cane and plantations of tropical fruits, vanilla and all manner of spices perfume the air. We will enjoy views from the Nez des Bouefs and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant we will visit the "Cite du Volcan" museum. Alternatively, enjoy a morning tour to a vanilla plantation in St Andre where we learn about the history and culture of this integral part of Reunion's heritage. We will also enjoy some free time in St Denis before returning to the MS Serenissima for lunch. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure before we set sail this evening.

### Day 5 - At Sea.

Enjoy a day at sea as we cross to Madagascar.

### Day 6 - Ile Sainte Marie, Madagascar.

Our first call in Madagascar is at Ile Sainte Marie, also known as Nosy Bohara, a lush tropical island offering sandy beaches, coral reefs and natural beauty. This morning we will explore the

capital of Ambodifotatra including the oldest church in Madagascar built in 1837 and the vibrant market. Over lunch we sail the short distance to La Crique and Natoria. Here we will use the Zodiacs to land on the beach from where our naturalists will lead some walks into the gardens and the small forest. Alternatively, enjoy the chance for a swim or snorkel off the beach.

### Days 7 & 8 - Nosy Mangabe & Masoala National Park.

Over breakfast we arrive at Nosy Mangabe, a 520 hectare island reserve in Antongil Bay. Here we find one of the most diverse areas of virgin rainforest in Madagascar which has also been an important research centre since the mid- 1960s when several aye-ayes and lemurs were released into the forest. We will use our Zodiacs to land on the beach next to the forest and organise a series of nature walks looking at the varied trees, plants and ferns and also hope to spot chameleon, lizards and black and white ruffed lemur. For the birders, we will keep an eye out for Madagascar buzzard, kingfisher and paradise flycatchers. We remain in Antongil Bay overnight to visit Madagascar's largest protected area, the Masoala National Park which comprises coastal rainforest, flooded forests and marsh and mangroves. Mammal species encountered include the red-ruffed lemur, the red-fronted brown lemur and the ring-tailed mongoose. The park is also home to various species of brightly coloured Mantella frogs and all manner of extraordinary chameleons. Masoala is also a refuge of the endangered Madagascar redowl and Madagascar serpent eagle and many endemic bird species. We will run a series of walks for all levels during our time here whilst you also have the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

### Day 9 - Diego Suarez.





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After a morning at sea we will enter dramatic Diego Suarez, a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. This afternoon choose from a city tour visiting the Commonwealth Cemetery and Place Joffre, or the Malagasy Rain Forest at the Mount Amber National Park. Dividing into short and long walk parties we will go in search of lemurs and chameleons as we explore the rain forest. In the towering vegetation, we may spot several species of lemurs and chameleons as well as endemic birds, including parrots.

### Day 10 - Nosy Hara.

Sail overnight over the northern tip of Madagascar where strangely shaped limestone islets dot the aquamarine-coloured sea. The expedition team will decide on the most suitable island for landing, such as Nosy Hara. Enjoy swimming off the beach or choose to explore the island on foot observing the unusual vegetation. Depending on weather conditions, we will also offer a Zodiac cruise around the islands and a chance to snorkel over the coral.

### Day 11 - Nosy Tanikely.

We arrive this morning at the Nosy Tanikely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island which 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, our naturalists will lead guided walks on the island where we may see the resident lemurs, fruit bats and hermit crabs and enjoy fantastic views from the lighthouse on the island's highest point. Return to the ship for lunch and an afternoon at sea.

### Day 12 - Mahajanga.

Mahajanga is a major port in northwest Madagascar situated on the Betsiboka River and is our base for a full day excursion to Ankarafantsika National Park. This deciduous forest is a haven for birds, lemurs and reptiles and on a choice of walks, we will explore with our guides. Eight species of lemur have been observed here including the famous Microcebus, the smallest primate in the world. Meanwhile over 120 species of birds nest here and we will keep an eye out for the Madagascan fish eagle and banded kestrel whilst the 44 species of reptile include chameleon, turtles and crocodiles that live in Lake Ravelobe. We will enjoy lunch in the park and in the afternoon there will be options to join further walks, watch for birdlife at the nearby lake or we have requested permissions to visit the Durrell breeding programme which was established at Ampijora and is dedicated to protecting the ploughshare tortoise, one of the most threatened breeds in the world.

### Day 13 - At Sea.

Relax on board and enjoy the lecture programme as we continue our journey around the Madagascan coast.

### Day 14 - Morondava.

From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, we will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach. From here we have a choice of excursions to explore the local region. A half day morning tour will visit the Avenue de Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the world, six are endemic to Madagascar. Here we will see the *Adansonia grandidieri* species with a row of 20 to 25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before returning to Morondava and exploring the local market. Alternatively, join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest. Situated approximately a two hour drive from



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Morondava, we will pass the Avenue de 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 includes many endemic species. Here we find three species of baobab, many birds and reptiles including snakes, tortoises and lizards, eight species of lemur including the rare pale form marked lemur and other mammals including giant jumping rat, fosa and narrow-striped mongoose.

#### Day 15 - Tulear.

Our last call in Madagascar will be Tulear on the southwest coast. Arriving at lunchtime we have a choice of activities this afternoon. Maybe drive to the Antsokay Arboretum which is entirely devoted to conservation of the plants from the southwest of Madagascar and, after more than 30 years of hard work, 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% is endemic to the region. Alternatively visit the Reniala Private Reserve, a small area of just 60 hectares but containing a spiny forest which is unique to South Eastern Madagascar. The park is home to 200 plant species including baobabs as well as being a paradise for birders with sightings of paradise flycatchers, Madagascar hoopoe and Madagascar crested drongo.

#### Day 16 - Tulear to London.

Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our specially chartered flight to Johannesburg. Connect here with our scheduled onward flight to London. Alternatively, for further wildlife experiences join our extension to the Kruger National Park.

#### Day 17 - London.

Arrive this morning.

#### Please Note:

Itineraries are subject to change.



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## YOUR SHIP: SERENISSIMA

<b>YOUR SHIP:</b>	<b>Serenissima</b>
<b>VESSEL TYPE:</b>	<b>Small Ship</b>
<b>LENGTH:</b>	<b>87.5 metres</b>
<b>PASSENGER CAPACITY:</b>	<b>103</b>
<b>BUILT/REFURBISHED:</b>	<b>1960 / 2019</b>

The handsome 103-passenger MS Serenissima began her career as the Harald Jarl, cruising the Norwegian coastline and fjords. With her small size she can navigate into small, remote ports inaccessible to the big cruise ships and appears an impressive sight when moored. With her fleet of Zodiacs she is capable of both destination and expedition cruising. The cabins are attractively designed for comfort and convenience. The MS Serenissima features a range of accommodations to suit your preferences, from the luxurious Serenissima Suites to comfortable staterooms. There are 10 categories of staterooms and suites arranged over 5 decks, as well as an accessible cabin on Deck 4. With the exception of the inside cabins, all staterooms are outside facing, with either portholes or windows. Indulge in exquisite cuisine at the Venice Restaurant. You will enjoy a buffet-style breakfast and lunch, featuring a variety of sweet and savoury options. Dinner will be a delightful three-course meal, served to you. With a focus on great flavours and fresh ingredients, dining here is a highlight of your journey. The dining room features great views from all tables. Located at the back of the ship, the Andrea Lounge offers a cosy and elegant space to unwind. Enjoy a quiet moment with a book,

socialise with fellow travellers, or simply take in the stunning views through the large windows. The lounge also features a bar, where you can enjoy a refreshing drink as you relax. Situated at the front of the ship, the Harald Jarl Lounge has comfortable seating and a warm ambiance, creating a welcoming atmosphere perfect for relaxation and conversation. Its inviting setting makes it an ideal spot to gather and unwind before dinner. Explore the ship's decks, where you can enjoy panoramic views, soak up the sun, or take a leisurely stroll. The outdoor areas feature an expansive observation deck, providing guests panoramic 360-degree views of the ocean and the surrounding landscape. From this vantage point, visitors can descend to the front deck (Deck 5), which includes an open-air bar and a compact



fitness room.

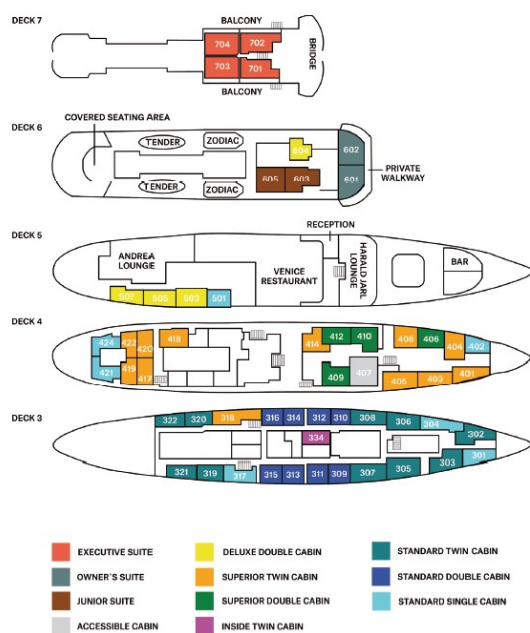
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## INSIDE YOUR SHIP







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## PRICING

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