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## DARWIN TO LAUTOKA LUXURY CRUISE

Give us three weeks and we will change the way you see the world. Departing from Darwin, hug the craggy coast as you sail east, over the top of Australia, looking for wildlife and learning about the rich history and traditions of the aboriginal peoples of this area. Sail across the Arafura Sea and enter the totally different worlds of Papua New Guinea and the Solomon Islands. The diverse and rich cultures of these islands will amaze you. Your final destination is Vanuatu for a Pacific Island adventure far beyond your imagination.



### ITINERARY

Day 1 Pre Cruise

Day 2 Darwin AUSTRALIA

"Australia's capital of the north is a uniquely tropical city, and a historically isolated outpost of this vast, diverse country. Reaching up towards the equator, a full 2,000 miles from Sydney and Melbourne, the city was named in honour of Charles Darwin by the British settlers who established a frontier outpost



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here. With a unique history, beautiful islands nearby, and a palette of sizzling Pacific flavours, colourful Darwin is an enchanting and exotic Australian destination. Crocodiles patrol the jungled waterways and tropical rainforests around Australia's gateway to the Top End. Explore via airboat to look down on the veiny waterways of the mist-laced Kakadu National Park. The sounds of chattering birdlife and the gentle splash of fountains and waterfalls will fill your ears in George Brown Darwin Botanic Gardens. Soak it all in, before kicking back and relaxing with a picnic and a crackling barbecue. The sunshine and famous tropical pink sunsets mean many visitors naturally gravitate to the city's soft sands to relax at spots like pretty Mindil Beach, as evening approaches. The adjoining market is filled with souvenirs and crafts stands and is the perfect great place to enjoy some fiery Asian flavours. Stroll the stalls, grab some food, and crack open an ice-frosted beer as the sunset show begins. It may be remote, but Darwin found itself on the front line during the Pacific War, as the Japanese air force unloaded their bombs onto the city in 1942. This relaxed unassuming city has a deeply resilient backbone, however, and you can explore the museums to learn more of the war's impact on Darwin, as well as the devastating effects of one of Australia's worst natural disasters, Cyclone Tracy in 1973."

### Day 3 Victoria Settlement AUSTRALIA

Nestled into the highly indented and rainforest-cloaked coastline of the Cobourg Peninsula, about as far north as you can go in the Northern Territory, lie the historic ruins of Victoria Settlement. At first glance the remains of weathered brick chimneys suggest a civilisation hewed out of the wilderness, but as the story unfolds, they become a monument to the folly of colonial expansion in a remote and unforgiving setting. The

outpost was founded in 1838 to serve as a re-supply post for ships passing through the Torres Strait, and to strengthen British territorial claims. Now, as you walk around the various crumbling structures, it's difficult not to appreciate the vibrant jungle enclosing the site, yet this same beautiful environment must have been viewed differently by the pioneers. The suffocating climate and fever gradually weakened and whittled down the population. Isolation and infrequent visits from ships eroded the spirits of the survivors. Unappealing to reinforcements, Victoria was abandoned after 11 years. The Cobourg Peninsula has since returned to its former glory under the alias Garig Gunak Barlu National Park. Its diverse wildlife list includes 6 species of marine turtle, dugong and wild banteng cattle (threatened in their native Indonesia). Even more notable is its recognition as an internationally important wetland habitat (under the Ramsar Convention). The park is administered jointly by the Parks and Wildlife Service and the traditional landowners, the Iwaidja speaking peoples.

### Day 4 Elcho Island (Banthula) AUSTRALIA

Elcho Island, known as Galiwinku by the indigenous Yolngu, is the largest of the Wessel Islands in Northeast Arnhem Land. The main settlement on the island's southwestern side had started during WWII as a refuge from possible bombings of an air force base on nearby Milingimbi Island, some 70 km away. Banthula is one of the homelands on Elcho Island's northwestern side facing the Arafura Sea. It was founded in 1979 when the Australian government encouraged the indigenous population to return to lands they had used before contact with the western world and to establish small settlements, the so-called homelands or outstations. Banthula is some 300 meters inland from Refuge Bay's 7 kilometer long sandy shore. Some 40



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Aborigines live in Banthula, almost 2% of Elcho Island's population. The school closest to the Banthula children is some 12 km away at Gawa –it actually is one of Australia's most remote schools. The area around Banthula has dry rain forest and an extensive mangrove growth is found around a creek at the northern end of the beach and bay. Green turtles, flatback turtles, hawksbill turtles, and Olive Ridley turtles, as well as dugong and Australian snubfin dolphins have all been recorded in and around Refuge Bay and Bridled Terns have been found nesting.

### Day 5 Yirrkala AUSTRALIA

Yirrkala is an aboriginal community in northeastern Arnhem Land and has a population of roughly 800 residents. The Yolngu have been in the area for more than 40,000 years, but they only congregated here in larger numbers when the township was founded after a Methodist mission was started in 1935. This small coastal settlement became famous in the 1960s as the Yolngu opposed the opening of a bauxite mine on their land, writing (and sending) the Yirrkala Bark Petition to the Australian House of Representatives. Yirrkala is also one of the best-known locations of Aboriginal art -not only in the Northern Territories- and has the community controlled Buku-Larrnggay Mulka Art Centre and Museum. Just 10 kilometers south of Yirrkala is Wurrwurrwuy, an interesting arrangement of stones listed on the Australian National Heritage List. The stones have been set up in the mid-19th century and depict praus, canoes, sea cucumber boiling spots and houses. The arrangement of praus even indicate the division onboard the vessels, showing an excellent knowledge of non-aboriginal items connected with the Macassan sea cucumber trade.

### Day 6 Thursday Island AUSTRALIA

Thursday Island – TI to locals or Kawrareg in Waiben dialect – is the ultimate Aussie retreat. Grab a cold beer, find a spot on a wooden pub deck overlooking turquoise blue seas and contemplate the remote beauty of the island. Whilst certainly not the biggest of the Torres Strait Islands, it is the most populated. That is not to say it's a bustling metropolis. At last count, there were fewer than 3,000 residents for its 3.5 km<sup>2</sup>. The Torres Strait Islands is a 274-strong archipelago found scattered between the coasts of mainland Oz and Papua New Guinea. The origin of the name is unknown; what is certain however is that Captain Owen Stanley named neighbouring islands Tuesday, Wednesday and Friday when he visited in 1848, so it is a safe assumption that he named Thursday too. Thursday and Friday's names were swapped about 8 years later so they appeared in weekday order. Budding explorers should note that Monday, Saturday and Sunday have yet to be found, so perhaps this could be your lucky day. The island enjoyed a lucrative pearl and shell trade until WWII, and many Japanese pearl divers became residents. This worked out well for the islanders; Thursday Island was mercifully left alone by during the extensive WWII bombings, probably because it was thought that there were Japanese nationals still living there (there weren't). Superb and pristine example of the island's heritage still stand, and can be seen in the Green Hill Fort, the Thursday Island Customs House and the Gab Titui Cultural Centre.

### Day 7 Day at sea INTERNATIONAL WATERS

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### Day 8 Alotau PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Alotau is the provincial capital of the Milne Bay Province located in the southeast bay of Papua New Guinea. The town and surrounding area has been an important staging ground during World War II and you'll discover remains and memorials dating back or referring to the war. On a tour of the town, visitors will appreciate lovely vistas of the bay and experience the markets, which are frequented not only by locals, but also by islanders selling their products or looking for produce to take back into Milne Bay. Alotau is an important port facility for the islands and attracts many vendors of handicrafts from different islands.

### Day 9 Dei Dei Hot Springs, Fergusson Island PAPUA NEW GUINEA & Dobu Island PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Fergusson is one of the three biggest and mountainous islands in the Milne Bay Province, and part of the D'Entrecasteaux Islands. On Fergusson's south side are the famous Dei Dei geysers – natural hot springs that periodically erupt with vapour steam next to mud pools and a warm stream. The hot springs are still used by locals to cook food in palm frond and pandanus leaf baskets placed into the boiling hot water. Birds in the area include Eclectus Parrots, Yellow-bellied Sunbirds and the endemic Curl-crested Manucode – a bird-of-paradise. Dobu is a small island in the D'Entrecasteaux Group next to Fergusson Island and Normanby Island. The island was formerly feared because of black magic and the local “witch” doctors cursing the healthy or treating the sick. An anthropological study was done by Reo Fortune in the 1930s which resulted in the book “The Island of Sorcerers”. The island is also part of the famous Kula ring. Participants in the exchange system pride themselves with mwali and soulava (armbands and necklaces) that are given and received still today and it is interesting to see how the traditional objects have been adorned with modern

paraphernalia. A stroll through the main village on the northwestern tip will show the school and church and trails leading along the shore passing traditionally thatched houses and gardens.

### Day 10 Kuiawa Island PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Kuiawa (Kuyau) is one of the Trobriand Islands, the northernmost islands in the Milne Bay Province. Kuiawa is found some 200 kilometers from the province's capital and to the southwest of Kiriwina, the largest and best known of the islands. The Trobriand Islands are of uplifted limestone and gardening is not that easy –but Trobriand Islanders are known for their magic to improve the growth of yam, a highly desired plant for ceremonial reasons and as food. Certain islands and villages have yam houses where the larger yams are stored and displayed. Houses are strung along the main road through the village and beach almond, casuarina and frangipani trees give shade. Trobriand Islanders are famous carvers and dancers and local groups and school classes love to compete dancing or playing their version of cricket, especially during harvest time.

### Day 11 Jacquinot Bay PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Jacquinot Bay is a large open bay on the eastern coast of the island of New Britain. It is a tranquil place with white sandy beaches and tropical palm trees all around. There is also a well-known beautiful waterfall that flows out of the mountainside with freezing cold water right onto the beach. But during WWII, however, it was not a quiet place. It was, in fact, an important base for the Australian Army who liberated it in November 1944. This base was used to support Australian operations near Rabaul which were conducted in early 1945 in conjunction with advances on the northern side of New Britain.



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### Day 12 Rabaul PAPUA NEW GUINEA

If surreal and unique experiences are your thing, then the Papua New Guinean town of Rabaul should tick your travel boxes. Found on the north eastern tip of New Britain Island (the largest island off mainland PNG) Rabaul, the former provincial capital, has quite a remarkable location. The town is inside the flooded caldera of a giant volcano and several sub-vents are still quite active today! The lively city was almost entirely devastated by Mount Tavurvur in 1994, covering the city in ashfall, but thankfully costing no lives. Since then, thanks to Rabaul's deep-water port, commerce has been on the up, and a few shops and hotels have managed to find an audience. However, Rabaul's remote location together with the volcano still being one of the most active and dangerous in Papua New Guinea means tourism is not rife. Rabaul has an impressive WWII history which includes a 300-mile network of tunnels dug by Japanese POW designed to conceal munitions and stores. After the Pearl Harbour bombings, the Japanese used Rabaul as their South Pacific base for the last four years of WWII, and by 1943 there were about 110,000 Japanese troops based in Rabaul. Post war, the island was returned to Australia, before it was granted independence in 1975. It should be noted that patience is a virtue here. However, that is not all bad. The slow pace of transportation allows travellers to marvel at the quite astonishing landscape. Divers will also be richly rewarded – the marine life of the island is extraordinary.

### Day 13 Day at sea INTERNATIONAL WATERS

Days at sea are the perfect opportunity to relax, unwind and catch up with what you've been meaning to do. So whether that is going to the gym, visiting the spa, whale watching, catching up on your reading or simply topping up your tan, these blue sea days are the perfect balance to busy days spent exploring

shore side.

### Day 14 Kennedy Island SOLOMON ISLANDS & Njari Island SOLOMON ISLANDS

Wild, uninhabited and historical, Kennedy Island is a tiny piece of land in the middle of the Pacific Ocean. Part of the remote Solomon Islands, the island is situated 15 min away by boat from Gizo, which is capital of the Western Province. Kennedy Island was formerly known as Plum Pudding Island, after an incident dating back to World War II. Incident involving one of the most famous figures of history. John F. Kennedy, a lieutenant at the time, was a castaway on the island with his crew when their torpedo ship, PT 109, was shot sunk by the Japanese troops in August 1943. It is said that the future president swam dragging an injured crewmate by holding the strap of his life jacket in his teeth until reaching the island. He and his crew fed themselves with coconuts during two days before being found by Solomon Islanders. JFK even kept a coconut shell from the island on his desk in the Oval Office throughout his presidency. For our history buffs, some artefacts dating from the crew's passage can still be found on site. An island marked by history in short, but not only. Discovering Kennedy Island is an experience not to be missed for diving and nature lovers. The waters that surround the island are a submerged world of great richness and variety of colourful fishes and corals. Njari is a small island almost entirely covered in trees with just a small sand spit at its eastern end. A labyrinth of reefs and coral heads make an approach quite difficult. Recently a small wooden jetty has been built on the southern side. The small beaches invite one to relax, but swimming from the beach is almost impossible as the corals are too close. To enjoy the underwater world one has to enter the water from Zodiac snorkel platforms, a short distance from the shore, where



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an amazing array of fish and coral will be visible. Two hundred and seventy nine different fish species have been seen during a single dive; the fourth-highest fish count ever recorded. An indication of why this island is considered a top spot for snorkeling in the Solomon Islands.

### Day 15 Lumalihe Island, Marove Lagoon SOLOMON ISLANDS

Marovo Lagoon is one of the world's largest saltwater lagoons. Described by American author James A. Michener as, "one of the seven natural wonders of the world," Marovo is home to a double barrier reef system, and is one of two sites in the Solomon's currently under consideration for UNESCO World Heritage Site status. Residents of Marovo Lagoon make elegant woodcarvings that are often for sale on the shoreline. Marovo is also renowned as one of the best diving and snorkeling spots on the planet.

### Day 16 Rauhi Island SOLOMON ISLANDS

Live out your most outrageous desert island fantasies amid the scarcely believable beauty of tiny Rauhi Island. Peeking out of the turquoise blue waters of the Solomon Sea, this bullet-shaped sliver of land is one of the smallest of the Solomon Islands' 1,000 landmasses. Waiting just off the east coast of Guadalcanal, discover Rauhi Island - a tropical gem surrounded by an undisturbed collection of the most dazzling coral reefs you've ever seen. A tiny isle of thick emerald vegetation, its alluring ring of crisp white sand invites you to lay back and let it all go. Or enjoy beautiful swimming and snorkelling in shimmering, untroubled waters. Dugongs - or sea cows - gently graze in the warm seas around the island, and are just one example of this tropical paradise's remarkable fauna, which comes in all shapes and sizes. Look into the balanced ecosystems of lively coral reefs, tread fine sand, and explore the

shallow seas that link Rauhi with nearby Kosa Island. The glass-clear waters and sparkling sunsets are sure to leave a lasting impression, as you island-hop through the untouched beauty of the Solomon Islands.

### Day 17 Santa Ana SOLOMON ISLANDS

Port Mary is the name of the bay adjacent to Ghupuna, the main village in Santa Ana. A bright white sand beach with huge shade-giving trees runs along the shoreline in front of the tidy village. The houses here are made with local materials and most are built on stilts. Islanders generally welcome visitors with traditional songs and dances performed by members of the three different villages on Santa Ana. Some local people will also set up stands offering souvenirs for purchase. The Solomons are best known for strings of traditional shell money and elegant carvings based on local stories and legends.

### Day 18 Day at sea INTERNATIONAL WATERS

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### Day 19 Champagne Beach VANUATU

As world famous beaches go, Champagne Beach is one of the big hitters. In 2003, CNN ranked it number nine in its list of top 100 beaches and independent travel specialists permanently include it on their list of 50 best beaches worldwide. It's one of the world's greatest natural beauties: picture-perfect beach white sand, turquoise water and nothing - save for the occasional cow or curious turtle - around. With only coconut



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plantations and a few friendly locals to keep you company, this might just be the island of your dreams. The glorious name “Champagne Beach” was given to the island in the 17th century, when Pedro de Quirós believed he had reached the famous unknown southern land or the “Tierra Australis Incognita” (or Australia as we now know it). He believed the effervescent bubbles of volcanic origin that bubble up from the crystal clear waters were reminiscent of the bubbles of Champagne. Additionally, the coastline is shaped like an art deco Champagne saucer, so the name stuck! The beach is located on the largest yet least populated island in the 40-island Vanuatu archipelago, near the village of Hog Harbor on Espiritu Santo Island. If you want to venture beyond the beach, then Espiritu Santu is also famed for its blue holes. The island is home to some of the clearest waters on Earth, benefiting from natural filtering from underground limestone caves. Ride or paddle your way through emerald green rainforest amid the sound of birdsong for an experience that will make your soul sing.

### Day 20 Ambrym Island VANUATU

Unlike Espiritu Santo with its raised coral reefs and white sand, Ambrym is a volcanically active island with dark sand beaches. Ambrym is known as the island of magic and is the source of five local languages that all evolved on Ambrym. This handful of languages contributes to the well over 100 languages of Vanuatu. Some of Ambrym’s magic takes place in the lush greenery of the local community of Ranon. Here the people perform a very special and traditional ‘Rom’ dance. Participants prepare their masks and costumes in secrecy and the dance is reserved for special occasions.

### Day 21 Day at sea INTERNATIONAL WATERS

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### Day 22 Yasawa FIJI

Nabukeru is the largest village on Yasawa, located within the grouping of the roughly 20 volcanic islands that make up the Yasawa Islands in Fiji. Until 1987 these islands were closed to land-based tourism and could only be viewed from aboard a vessel. With their clear, aquamarine waters and ecologically diverse tropical, mountainous landscapes, these islands were the location for the filming of the romantic adventure film *The Blue Lagoon* (both the 1949 and 1980 versions). Opposite Nabukeru is Sawa-i-Lau, an island famous for the limestone caves of the same name. The Sawa-i-Lau caves can only be accessed by climbing stairs from the beach, passing a small door and then jumping into the larger cave’s pool. The second cave and pool can only be reached by swimming at low tide through an underwater tunnel. Nabukeru villagers assert that the cave is the heart of the Yasawas.

### Day 23 Lautoka FIJI

It doesn’t get much sweeter than arriving on the sun-soaked shores of the Sugar City. Fiji’s second-biggest settlement opens up a world of blissful beaches and turquoise seascapes, while its dense jungle lures the adventurous deep into its embrace. Step ashore where the first Fijians landed, and you’ll understand instantly why they chose to make this island paradise their heavenly home. Experience rich Fijian life, and see dramatic displays like warrior dances, and remarkable local practices like



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firewalks, which kick up burning embers into the night's sky. Legend says the city took its name after two chiefs faced each other in a duel. A spear pierced one of the chiefs, leading to the shout of 'lau-toka!' or 'spear hit!' Sugar is Lautoka's main trade, but its botanical gardens are a sweet insight into the tropical plant life that thrives here - from pearl white lilies to tall, fragrant orchids. Explore temples, charming cafes and mills - or barter for some of the juiciest mangoes you'll ever taste at the city's lively market. You'll only be able to resist the beaches for so long, and it doesn't get much more stunning than the Blue Lagoon - a heavenly blend of woven together turquoise shades. Remote, wild and unspoiled, these are some of the best tropical beaches in the world. There's more rejuvenating relaxation at the mineral-rich mud pools and spas, fuelled by the volcanic activity below. Savala Island is a teardrop of sand offshore, and another beautiful place to wander with the soft powder between your toes - along sandy spits that peter out into the water. Or swim and snorkel among its envied reefs, thronging with fish life.

**Please note:**

The excursions are provided as a sample of what may be offered on this voyage and are subject to change.



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With 18-brand new Zodiacs, four superlative restaurants in Antarctica and a pole to pole expedition itinerary, Silver Cloud really does break the ice between expedition and luxury. Spacious yet intimate, designed to cross oceans and yet able to slip up rivers and into hidden harbours with ease, the yacht-like Silver Cloud carries just 296 guests in incomparable comfort and style. Combining spacious ocean-view suites and private verandas with stunning dining and entertainment options, Silver Cloud provides world-class cruise accommodations, service and amenities. After extensive refurbishment, Silver Cloud is the most spacious and comfortable ice class vessel in expedition cruising. Her large suites, her destination itineraries and her unparalleled service make her truly special. Her four dining options will tantalise your taste buds and as 80% of her suites include a veranda, watching a breaching whale or a few cavorting penguins has never been so personal. She carries a limited number of guests in polar waters, meaning that Silver Cloud has the highest space to guest and crew to guest ratios in expedition cruising. With her 18 zodiacs, 10 kayaks, possibilities are almost limitless with ship-wide simultaneous explorations.



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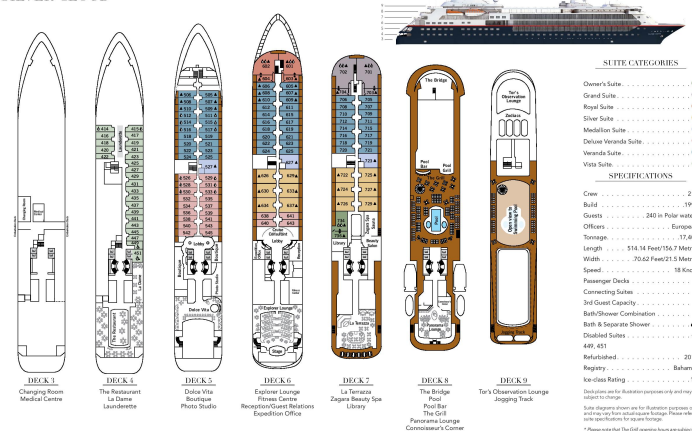
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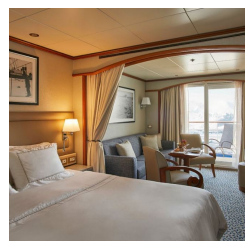
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## PRICING

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Grand Suite. From	£97410 GBP pp
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Deluxe Veranda Suite. From	£25143 GBP pp
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