

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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HISTORIC TOWNS & GARDENS OF ITALY - A VOYAGE FROM NAPLES TO MALTA

Join us aboard the MS Hebridean Sky for this new springtime voyage around Southern Italy and Sicily as we immerse ourselves in the many horticultural and cultural splendours of the region. The combined effect of the natural beauty of the coast and gardens along with the intriguing history and stunning architecture of the towns and cities makes for a most appealing springtime journey and offers a very different experience to that which can be undertaken aboard the larger cruise liners in the region. May is a wonderful month for our voyage and we can expect verdant gardens, landscapes awash with blossoms, moderate temperatures and all with the absence of high season crowds. On most days during our voyage there will be a choice of included tours which you can choose from depending on your interest or perhaps based upon where you have visited before. From Naples you can explore the magnificent site of Herculaneum or the wonderful La Mortella garden on Ischia, whilst in Catania you may wish to visit the slopes of Mount Etna or explore the gardens of the villa of Princess Borghese, and in Syracuse you can visit the Archaeological Park or enjoy a private visit to the gardens of the Marquis of San Giuliano. Other highlights of our itinerary include the impressive Greek theatre at Taormina, the fascinating site at Paestum founded by the Greeks in 600 BC and the beautiful gardens located on the ruins of the old city of Ninfa. With just over 100 or so fellow, like-minded travellers and an expert team on board, together with informative local guides, you will have seen and learnt so much upon arrival in Malta at the end of our voyage. All will be achieved with great ease from the comfort of the all-suite MS Hebridean Sky which has the advantage of being able to access

many of the region's ports which the big ships



simply cannot.

ITINERARY

Day 1 London or Manchester to Naples, Italy.

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Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky for embarkation.

Day 2 Naples, Herculaneum & Ischia.

From our berth in Naples we see the Norman castle that protects the port and the backdrop of Mount Vesuvius in the distance. There will be a choice of tours today including a visit to Herculaneum, a wealthy Roman town which was completely submerged by volcanic mud following the 79 AD 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 a free afternoon to explore the vibrant city of Naples at your own pace. Alternatively, on a full day tour, we will use the local ferry to visit the island of Ischia. Here our focus will be on "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 breathtaking views of the Bay of Forio. Spread over two hectares there are fountains, ponds, streams and scattered everywhere are water-loving plants. Lunch will be served on the island before we return by ferry to Naples.

Day 3 Gaeta & Ninfa Gardens.

Sail this morning into Gaeta, a pretty town built on the slopes of

Monte Orlando. Populated since the 9th century BC the town grew during the Roman Empire as a seaside retreat for the elite. Surrounded by the mighty walls of the Angevin Aragonese Castle, Gaeta's historic centre is a collection of narrow streets and small porticoes dominated by the 12th century Duomo. Choose to stay and explore the town or join a full day tour which visits the beautiful gardens located on the ruins of the old city of Ninfa. Founded by the Romans, the city grew as part of the pope's estates in the middle ages. Taken over by the Caetani family in the 16th century, the town was gradually abandoned due to the expansion of the surrounding marshes and the arrival of malaria. Left neglected for centuries it was in 1921 that Gelasio Caetani began to transform the gardens around the ruins of the old city. He planted species gathered from his travels abroad that survived in the microclimate benefiting from the location between the coast and mountains. Today jasmine and wisteria wind over ruined towers and walls, rejoicing in the lush damp conditions. The setting is indescribably atmospheric, with roses scrambling for footholds in ruined archways, and the frescoed church wall still standing open to the weather.

Day 4 Salerno, Paestum & Cilento.

Overnight we will have sailed around the Amalfi coast to the ancient city of Salerno, our gateway to the Cilento region, a mix of small villages, coastal paths, archaeological sites, national parks and renowned as the home of the Mediterranean diet. Maybe choose to visit the site of Paestum, which was founded by Greeks in 600 BC. This well preserved and fascinating site was rediscovered in 1752 and during our time we will see the impressive Temple of Poseidon, the Basilica, Amphitheatre and

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Aethenian before spending some time in the museum, adjacent to the site. Alternatively, learn about one of the region's main exports as we visit a farm to hear about the production of the local Mozzarella di Bufala or enjoy a tasting at one of the Cilento vineyards.

Day 5 Vibo Valentia, Tropea & Stromboli.

Arrive this morning into the Calabrian town of Vibo Valentia. Founded as a Greek colony, known as Hipponion and part of Magna Graecia, the town has since been under the rule of the Brutti, Romans, Normans, Arabs and Byzantines. This morning we can explore the Medieval historical centre which is dominated by the ancient Norman Castle, which now houses the state archaeological museum and the bell tower of San Michele. Later, we drive to nearby Tropea, a clifftop village voted one of the most beautiful in Italy. As we explore the historical centre we see the Norman Cathedral before continuing to the Sanctuary of Santa Maria dell'Isola, an 11th century chapel originally built on an island but now connected to the town by a causeway. We will also try the town's famous delicacy of sweet red onions. Return to the ship for lunch and an afternoon at sea as we sail to Stromboli, the 'Lighthouse of the Mediterranean'. Enjoy dinner on board and, if weather permits, we hope to view the eruptions from the island's active volcano. Please note that we may be at anchor this morning and if so will use the onboard Zodiacs or local tenders to go ashore.

Day 6 Messina for Taormina, Sicily.

From the nearby port of Messina we will visit Taormina, a walled

town lying in the shadow of Mount Etna, Europe's highest volcano. The town has been a popular tourist destination since the 19th century and our guided tour will include walking the characteristic alleys before visiting the 15th century Palazzo Corvaja and the impressive Greek Theatre from where there are marvellous views over the town and coast. For those who wish to enjoy longer here you will be able to take lunch independently in one of the local restaurants and spend an afternoon exploring at leisure before our coach returns to Messina. Alternatively, return to the MS Hebridean Sky for lunch and enjoy free time in Messina before we sail this evening.

Day 7 Catania & Mount Etna.

This morning we arrive in Catania. The architecture here is particularly impressive but a little forbidding, being mainly constructed from black lava stone from Mount Etna. On a morning walking tour during which we will see the magnificent Piazza del Duomo which is a World Heritage Site, St Agatha's Cathedral and the imposing 13th century Castello Ursino. Alternatively, leave the city as we drive to the slopes of Mount Etna, Europe's largest active volcano. Our drive will take us past scenic countryside, small towns and vineyards before arriving at the Silvestri Craters that were created by the eruption of 1892. Located approximately 2,000 metres above sea level, we will walk along a comfortable path from which there is a wonderful view of the coast and then take a stroll on the lava stream with our guide. A final option will drive south to Lentini, which was founded in 729 BC by the Greeks, as we make our way to the Contrada Biviere and the villa of Princess Borghese. During a tour of the gardens we can see palms, cheerful blue jacaranda,

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Parkinsonia, old roses and an unusual sprawling Xanthorrea arborea which faces the Sant'Andrea chapel.

Itineraries are subject to change.

Day 8 Syracuse.

Our last day is spent in Syracuse which was founded by the Greeks in 734 BC and by the 5th century was a political and military power throughout the Mediterranean, rivalling Athens as the largest and most beautiful city in the Greek world. This morning you may choose to visit the Neapolis Archaeological Park to discover the 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, enjoy a private visit to the gardens of the Marquis of San Giuliano. Set in 60 hectares and divided into 'rooms' we can see the Mediterranean, Arabian and Tropical gardens, the lawned park and enclosed courtyards. We can walk under vine covered pergolas and along mosaic paths all whilst enjoying the views towards Mount Etna in the distance. The afternoon is free to explore Syracuse at our own pace before we sail this evening.

Day 9 Valletta, Malta to London or Manchester.

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

Please note:

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YOUR SHIP: HEBRIDEAN SKY

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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.

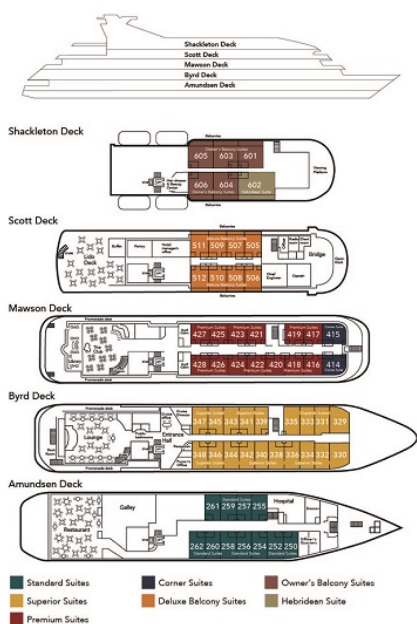
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07-May-2025 to 15-May-2025

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