

## The Small Cruise Ship Collection

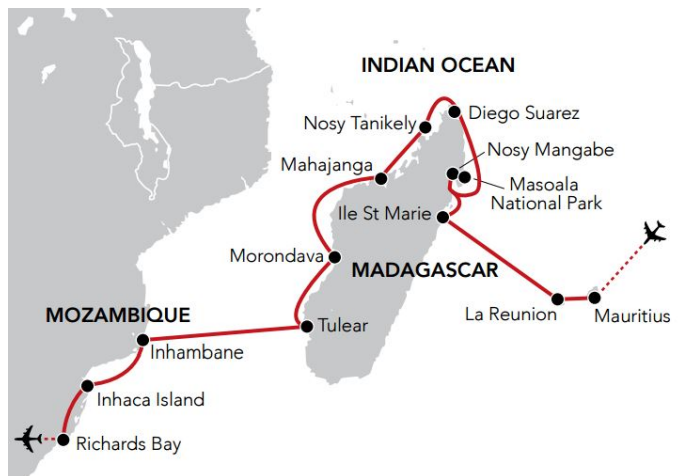
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## MADAGASCAR & BEYOND

The term unique is often an 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 Island Sky 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 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 leaders will provide commentary on all that we see and will reveal the wonders of the worlds eighth continent.



### ITINERARY

Day 1 - London to Mauritius.

Fly by scheduled flight.

Day 2 - Mauritius.

Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Island Sky. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 3 - La Reunion.

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.

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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.

#### Day 4 - At sea.

Enjoy a full day cruising across to the island of Madagascar. Maybe join one of the onboard lectures or enjoy some time on deck.

#### Day 5 - Ile Ste Marie, Madagascar.

Our first call in Madagascar is at Ile Ste Marie, also known as Nosy Bohara. In the 17th and 18th century it was a popular base for pirates who used the secluded bays to plunder ships returning from the East Indies. Today it is a lush tropical island with sandy beaches, coral reefs and natural beauty. This morning we will explore the capital of Ambodifotatra including the pirate cemetery and the oldest church in Madagascar which was built in 1837. Over lunch we will find a spot to launch the Zodiacs for snorkelling.

#### Day 6 - Nosy Mangabe.

Awake at Nosy Mangabe, a 520 hectare island reserve in Antongil Bay. Here we find one of the most diverse areas of virgin rain forest 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.

#### Day 7 - Masoala National Park.

We remain in Antongil Bay overnight and enjoy a morning to visit Madagascars 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, the aye-aye, the greater hedgehog tenrec, the fossa 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 red-owl and Madagascar serpent eagle and many endemic bird species. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and an afternoon at sea as we cruise along the Madagascan coastline.

#### Day 8 - Diego Suarez.

In the afternoon we will enter the dramatic Diego Suarez a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. After a brief tour of the town we will make our way to 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 explore the rain forest. In the towering vegetation we may spot several species of lemurs, as well as endemic birds, including parrots. If this is not possible due to local conditions, we will instead visit the Domaine de Fontenay where we will explore the reserve which is rich with flora, fauna and several waterfalls. On our return to our vessel we will take a detour to the bay of Diego with its impressive views of the sugar loaf and also home to the indigenous baobab suareziensis tree.

#### Day 9 - Nosy Tanikely.



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We in the morning in the Nosy Tanikely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island which offers fantastic 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 and enjoy fantastic views from the lighthouse on the islands highest point. Return to the ship for lunch and a relaxing afternoon at sea.

### Day 10 - 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 enjoy lunch in the park and this afternoon can join further walks or 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 11 - At sea.

Enjoy a relaxing day at sea.

### Day 12 - 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 20-25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before returning to Morondova and exploring the local market. Alternatively join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest. Situated approximately a two hour drive from Morondova, 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 13 - Tulear.

Our last call in Madagascar will be Tulear on the southwest coast. From the port we will 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.

### Day 14 - At sea.

Relax onboard as we cross the Mozambique Channel. Our lecture programme will continue in the lounge whilst you may want to watch for wildlife from the deck.

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**Day 15 - Inhambane, Mozambique.**

Inhambane was an important trading post for Arab merchants and sailors as early as the 11th century. It was part of Vasco de Gamas voyage in the late 15th century before the Portuguese arrived in the early 16th century, and in the 18th century they were joined by Indian traders. The mixture of African, Arab, European, and Indian influences are still present today. We will enjoy a morning to explore the town including the 200 year old Cathedral of our Lady of Conception and the Governors Palace.

**Day 16 - Inhaca Island.**

Situated in Maputo Bay, we visit subtropical Inhaca Island which is home to hundreds of coral species, fish, dolphins and up to three hundred bird species. Today you can choose to either snorkel on the coral reefs where we hope to find scorpion fish, butterflyfish and parrotfish or alternatively join our naturalists as we search for greater sand plovers, lesser crested tern and kingfisher.

**Day 17 - Richards Bay to London.**

Disembark this morning and transfer to Durban for our scheduled flight to London via Johannesburg.

**Day 18 - London.**

Arrive this morning.



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## YOUR SHIP: ISLAND SKY

**YOUR SHIP:** Island Sky

**VESSEL TYPE:**

**LENGTH:**

**PASSENGER CAPACITY:**

**BUILT/REFURBISHED:**

With a maximum passenger capacity of only 116, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Island Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers- the friendly crew of 75 crew and Scandinavian captains are experienced mariners, having been in service aboard large 2000 plus passenger vessels and who now prefer a less frantic life aboard a small ship. If, like them and us, you prefer a more peaceful life at sea, you will find the MS Island Sky the perfect ship. When choosing the vessel for your next voyage of discovery, you can select a ship with endless entertainment and impersonal service or come with us where peace, high quality service and attention to detail are the order of the day. We promise there will be no organised entertainment, fancy dress, deck games or any of the usual big ship experiences. The atmosphere on board is more akin to a private yacht or country hotel. A little music in the lounge or bar after dinner, guest speakers, informative port briefings from our cruise director and of course good food which may be enjoyed leisurely in the attractive dining room. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well run and exceedingly

comfortable ship. Your Suite Onboard there are 57 exceptionally spacious and well designed suites. All feature a sitting room area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views. Each affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring marble-topped vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television with inbuilt DVD player which can also play CDs and a telephone in each suite. Bottled water, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. The suites on each deck have their own colour theme. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be. 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. The onboard 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. There is

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also WI-FI access throughout the vessel. Outside there is a rear sun deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade, a bar and comfortable deck furniture for sun bathing or relaxing with a book. On the top deck there is a Jacuzzi and further observation and sun deck. There is also a small hairdressers on board with appointments made on request. Your Dining Another benefit of a small ship is the quality of the cuisine. With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the galley is able to provide delicious meals. Where possible and when it meets his high standards, the 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.

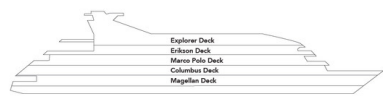
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## INSIDE YOUR SHIP



Explorer Deck



Erikson Deck



Marco Polo Deck



Columbus Deck



Magellan Deck



- Standard Suites
- Corner Suites with Deck Access
- Owner's Balcony Suites
- Superior Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Island Suite
- Premium Suites with Deck Access



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## PRICING

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