

The Small Cruise Ship Collection

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SOUTHERN INDIA & SRI LANKA BY SEA

For those seeking an informative and relaxing experience of India and Sri Lanka, what better way than a journey aboard the all-suite MS Hebridean Sky in the company of just over 100 fellow travellers. From this fine vessel, you can explore some of India's and Sri Lanka's most interesting coastal regions with the added knowledge that you will be returning each evening to all the comforts of a small and luxuriously appointed vessel. Exploring by small ship, we are able to see so much in just over two weeks, allowing for some leisurely interludes. Accompanied by an excellent onboard team, we can learn of the history and natural world as we journey between our fascinating ports of call. There is nowhere like India for observing the colourful day to day life, its markets, traders and general hubbub of the towns and cities, and contrastingly few places offer the peace and tranquillity which can be found around its temples, holy places and countryside. The intricate nature of its religions and cultures, together with its rich and absorbing history will be brought to life by our Guest Speaker, with informal onboard talks and the knowledgeable local guides who will accompany us ashore. Amongst the many highlights of our time in India will be our couple of days in the Malabar port of Cochin from where we will explore the 'backwaters', a network of lagoons, lakes, rivers and canals, observing the day to day life. Boats carrying the local produce of copra, coir and cashews travel slowly through peaceful, palm-shaded waterways and keen birdwatchers can have a field day looking out for fish eagles, kingfishers, egrets, herons and many more. Whilst in Sri Lanka, cultural highlights include the superb ancient remains of the royal ancient city of the Kingdom of Polonnaruwa, along with the

remnants of the Portuguese and Dutch colonial eras in Trincomalee and Galle and the fascinating and diverse city of Colombo. Not forgetting the country's magnificent natural world wonders, there will be the opportunity to visit the Bundala and Yala National Parks with their vast array of wildlife. All this and more will be achieved with ease with the benefit of returning to the vessel each evening to recharge the batteries with good food, caring service and a restful night's sleep ready to witness another day in these great lands of ancient faiths, customs and traditions along with some spectacular natural



world wonders.

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ITINERARY

Day 1 Chennai.

Transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day and evening is at leisure to enjoy the hotel facilities or explore at your own pace.

Day 2 Chennai.

After breakfast we will explore the flourishing city of Chennai. See the 14th century St Thome Cathedral, the Kapaleeshwara Temple dedicated to Shiva and the impressive Government Museum, which includes a superb collection of South Indian bronzes from the 7th century Pallava era. Lunch will be served in a local restaurant before we transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky and embark. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

Day 3 At Sea.

Spend the day cruising towards Sri Lanka. Maybe join a lecture in the lounge or find a spot on deck to relax.

Day 4 Trincomalee, Pigeon Island National Park & Polonnaruwa, Sri Lanka.

Arrive on the north east coast of Sri Lanka in Trincomalee, one of the finest deep water harbours of the world. Choose to join a morning excursion which includes Fort Frederick, built by the Portuguese in 1623, and walk to Swami Rock to see the

Koneswaram Temple, one of the five most holy Shaivite temples in the country. Alternatively join a local boat to Pigeon Island National Park, an island off the Sri Lankan coast and one of two national marine parks in the country. Here it will be possible to snorkel over the coral reefs and maybe see some of the turtle species that reside here. A third option today will be a full day tour to Polonnaruwa. This 5th century ancient city was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and is considered to be one of the best planned archaeological sites in the country. The entire landscape of the region is punctuated by high man-made reservoirs, the most famous of which is Parakrama Samudra or the Sea of Parakrama, built during King Parakramabahu's reign in 1164-1196 AD. The monuments in the ancient city are relatively well preserved and highlights are the Royal Palace complex, including the King's Palace and Audience Hall and the spectacular Gal Vihare complex of four massive images of the Buddha cut from a single slab of granite.

Days 5 & 6 Bundala National Park, Yala National Park & Kataragama.

We have one and a half days in Hambantota from where we will visit a couple of the region's highlights. We will visit Yala National Park, known as Ruhunu it was designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1900 and is now home to 44 varieties of mammal and 215 bird species. This vast region of arid scrub interspersed with pockets of dense forest and open patches of grassland hosts one of the highest densities of leopard in the world. On a jeep safari we also hope to see sloth bears, jackals, wild boar and elephants. From Hambantota there will also be the opportunity to explore Bundala National Park, a haven for birdwatchers and Sri Lanka's first designated wetland site of

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international importance. Located in the deep south of the island, the diversity of the park lies in its landscape, from dry thorny scrubland to sand dunes and salt marshes, to mangroves and lagoons. Take a jeep through the park and discover close to 200 species of bird as well as many species of butterfly, crocodiles, elephants and deer. Alternatively you may wish to visit Kataragama, one of the three most important religious sites in Sri Lanka and a popular place of pilgrimage for the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and the indigenous Vedda communities of Sri Lanka and South India. According to the Buddhists this was one of the 16 places visited by Buddha during his stays in Sri Lanka. We will explore the religious complex built across the Menik Ganga which contains buildings from all three religions including the mosque, the temple, the small archaeological museum and the principal shrine of the god Kataragama.

Day 7 Galle.

Awake this morning in Galle where we take a walking tour of the impressive Galle Fortress. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the port where the Portuguese first landed in Sri Lanka in the 16th century and was then extensively fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. Also see the maritime museum, which is housed in an old Dutch house, the lighthouse, mosque and church before taking a stroll through the narrow streets with their shuttered mansions and cloistered courtyards. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon is free to explore Galle further at your own pace or alternatively join a tour to a nearby tea plantation where we will learn about the growing processes and enjoy a tasting.

Day 8 Colombo.

Arrive today in Colombo, Sri Lanka's commercial capital and largest city which dates back over 600 years having been a trading hub for sea merchants and colonial rulers. Buddhist temples, Hindu temples, mosques and churches reflect the various beliefs practiced all over the island and the beautiful facades of the old, colonial buildings contrast with the modern but elegant shopping arcades that have been developed inside. There will be a choice of activities today including a cultural tour visiting the Gangaramaya Buddhist Temple, the National Museum and Independence Square. Alternatively visit the Kelaniya Buddhist Temple, located on the outskirts of the city it is believed that Buddha visited and preached his doctrine here to a gathering of serpentkings. Today worshippers come to lay sprigs of lotus flowers around the great white dagoba, light oil lamps, and sprinkle the base of the Tree of Enlightenment with purifying water. We can see the fine carvings and lovely frescoes, fascinating geometrically patterned ceiling paintings, and three important images of Buddha.

Day 9 Trivandrum, India.

After a morning at sea we return to India at the Kerala port of Trivandrum. Built over seven hills, the 'city of the sacred serpents' retains some of old Kerala's ambience, with its pagoda shaped buildings, red-tiled roofs and narrow winding lanes. There is much to see here and on our afternoon excursion we will include the old fort area around the 260 year old Sri Padmanabhaswamy Temple.

Days 10 & 11 Cochin.

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Cochin is an extraordinary city with strong influences of Portuguese, Chinese, Arab, Dutch and British cultures still much in evidence today and we have two days to enjoy this intriguing Malabar port. Visits will include the serene Kerala backwaters at Alleppey where we will board a local boat for a cruise past colonial warehouses and coconut thatched houses. For centuries, these canals provided a safe and efficient means of transportation for goods and people moving between the heartland of Kerala and the port towns along the coast. Even today, traditional barges, or kettuvallams, haul coconut, pepper, rice and other goods along the waterways. We will also have time in Cochin to explore the diverse mix of cultures and religions that together, with its strong trading past in spices and silks, make for a fascinating city. Discover Mattancherry Palace with its ornately decorated rooms including some marvellous ancient murals. We see the oldest European church in India, St Francis and the ruins of the fort. On our first evening as we moor overnight, we will enjoy a Kathakali performance on board after dinner. Based on the subject from the Ramayana, Mahabharata and stories from Saiva literature, Kathakali is one of the main forms of classical dance drama of India and indigenous to Kerala.

Day 12 Mangalore.

In the 14th and 15th centuries Mangalore traded with Persian and Arab merchants and was fought over by the Nayaka princes and the Portuguese. In the 18th century its control was contested by Hyder Ali and his son Tipu Sultan on the one hand,

and the British on the other. The influences of its turbulent history are still apparent in the cosmopolitan attitude and diverse religions that exist here. Today it is a business and commercial centre and is India's ninth largest cargo handling port exporting 75% of the country's coffee and the bulk of its cashew nuts and spices. Arriving at lunchtime we spend the afternoon learning about the cashew processing industry, before we visit Gokarnatha Temple and the remarkable St. Aloysius Chapel, with a fascinating series of intricate paintings that cover virtually every square inch of the interior ceiling and walls. Created over a period of two years by Brother Antonio Moscheni, an Italian artist, the chapel with its magnificent art work is one of the city's hidden gems.

Day 13 Goa.

In the 15th century Goa was the largest trading centre on India's west coast and when the Portuguese arrived in the early 16th century it was their plan to set up a colony to seize the control of the spice trade. Goa remained a Portuguese colony until 1961 when it became the 25th state of the Indian Republic. Whilst famous for her beautiful beaches Goa offers wonderful architecture with a mixture of Hindu and Catholic styles, unique history, rich culture and pretty natural scenery. Today we will explore Old Goa with its fine Basilica of Bom Jesus and the Neo Classical Church of St Cajetan. Afterwards choose to return to the ship or continue to a spice plantation where the cultivation of cardamom, chilli, cloves and coriander can be seen. We will enjoy the smells and tastes whilst we learn about their uses in Indian life.

Day 14 Mumbai.

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After a morning at sea we sail into Mumbai, a cluster of seven islands which were first home to the 'Koli' fisherman, who still occupy parts of the city shoreline today. Mumbai was derived from 'Mumba' the name of the Hindu goddess 'Mumbadevi' and 'Aai' - mother in the local Marathi language. First ceded to the Portuguese, the British Government took possession of the islands in 1665 before leasing them to the East India Company who founded the port and saw the city grow in size and importance. This afternoon we explore the city and see the prominent landmarks visiting the Gateway of India, Mani Bhavan, the former residence of Mahatma Gandhi when he stayed in Mumbai from 1917 to 1934 and Dhobi Ghat where we can observe the vast open air Indian laundry. Alternatively, travel to Gharapuri Island, better known as Elephanta Island and view the remarkable caves designated a UNESCO World Heritage Site. This labyrinth of cave temples feature courtyards, shrines, remarkable statues and vibrant sculptures that date from the 5th to 7th century AD.

Day 15 Mumbai.

Disembark this morning.

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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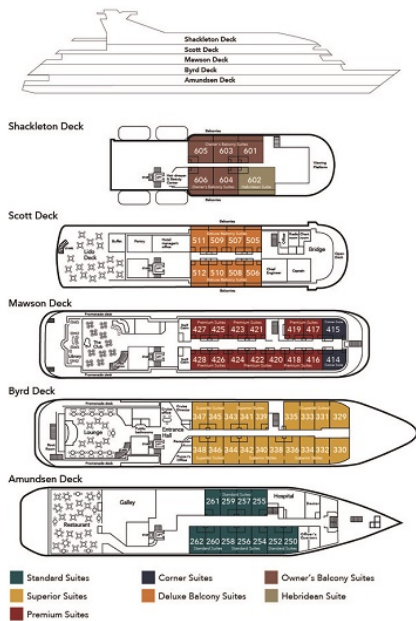
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Byrd Deck Superior Suite



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17-Feb-2025 to 03-Mar-2025

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