AN ISLAND HOPPING CARIBBEAN ODYSSEY

From Jamaica to Barbados aboard the MS Serenissima
5th to 20th March 2017

Noble Caledonia
When it comes to pure escapism there are few places in the world more fitting than the Caribbean. Join the MS Serenissima in Jamaica and set sail on our voyage through sub-tropical waters of beautiful scenery and island diversity. Every island has its own culture and this colourful mix of island personalities, varied terrain and lifestyles makes for a marvellous winter break. We have developed this itinerary to enable exploration of the chain of Caribbean islands from Jamaica to Barbados. With relatively short sailing distances along the way, we are able to maximise our time on each island, exploring the historical sites of the Spanish, Dutch and British colonial periods combined with the pretty ports, wonderful beaches and the rich natural world of flora and fauna of the region. In addition to our included excursions, we have allowed time for individual exploration of the islands and ample opportunity to swim in the warm waters of the Caribbean Sea.

**Guest Speaker**

Major JGH Corrigan MBE
Commissioned from The Royal Military Academy Sandhurst in 1962, Gordon Corrigan was an officer of the Royal Gurkha Rifles before retiring from the Army in 1998. He served mainly in the Far East (Malaya, Singapore, Borneo and Hong Kong), but also in Berlin, Cyprus, Belize and Northern Ireland. His last appointment was Commanding Officer of the Gurkha Centre in Hampshire. He is now a military historian and to date he has been the presenter of five TV series dealing with various aspects of military history. He has lectured and written on the Spanish American War and on Admiral Lord Nelson and is an authority on the Cold War, the Slave Trade and Piracy and is an Honorary Research Fellow of the Universities of Birmingham and Kent, a Fellow of the Royal Asiatic Society, a Member of the British Commission for Military History, a Freeman of the City of London and a Liveryman of the Worshipful Company of Farriers.
THE ITINERARY

Day 1 London to Kingston, Jamaica. Fly by scheduled indirect flight. On arrival transfer to the MS Serenissima and sail this evening.

Day 2 Port Antonio. Arrive this morning on the north coast of Jamaica and the small bustling port of Port Antonio renowned as the world’s banana capital and once home to Errol Flynn who described it as a “paradise unspoiled by human hands”. This morning you can opt to join a rafting trip on the Rio Grande as skilled raft men will impart their local knowledge about the native flora and fauna and the history and people of the area as we take in the wonderful natural surroundings. Alternatively enjoy a scenic drive to Reach Falls situated in the lush Montane Forest. We will have time to enjoy the falls and walk in the surrounding forest home to many species of fern as well as a variety of birds. Enjoy a swim in the emerald pool at the foot of the falls before returning to the MS Serenissima for lunch. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure in Port Antonio, relax on a local beach or if weather permits we may make a landing this morning on the Montpelier grounds where Errol Flynn lived. We will explore the gardens with its exotic flowers and indigenous birds that inhabit the area as we take in the wonderful natural surroundings.

Day 3 Santiago de Cuba, Cuba. A morning tour commences with a panoramic drive through the city including stops at the Moncada Garrison, which still bears bullet holes from Fidel Castro’s attempted coup in 1953 and the imposing Plaza de la Revolucion and the 16th century Casa de Diego Velazquez considered the oldest house in Cuba. We will also drive out of the city through lush tropical scenery to the Castillo del Morro which guards the entrance to the harbour, affording magnificent views. This afternoon is free to explore further independently or maybe join us as we visit one of the local rum factories learning about the production and enjoying a sample.

Day 4 At sea. Enjoy a leisurely day onboard, maybe join a lecture in the lounge or find a spot on deck to relax with a good book.

Day 5 Puerto Plata, Dominican Republic. We will arrive in the Dominican Republic this morning and our guided tour of Puerto Plata will include the colonial San Felipe Fort. Completed in 1577, it is the oldest military fortification in the Americas and where the hero of the independence movement, Juan Pablo Duarte was briefly confined. We will take the cable car to the top of the Isabel de Torres Mountain where, at the summit we will see the statue of Christ the Redeemer, a smaller copy of the one in Rio de Janeiro. Here we can explore the gardens with its exotic flowers and plantations and take the trails around the lake. Return to the MS Serenissima via the Brugal Rum Factory and enjoy a tasting of this local specialty. After lunch onboard enjoy a free afternoon to explore the town.

Day 6 Samana. Arrive this morning at the Samana Peninsula renowned for its unspoilt beaches, turquoise waters and lush mountains. In addition it is a centre for migrating humpbacks whales that are usually resident in the Marine Mammal Sanctuary from January to March. If conditions permit this morning we will use the Zodics or local boats to view these amazing creatures. This afternoon we visit Los Haitises National Park where we will explore magnificent limestone caves covered in Taino Indian art and visit Bird Island where we learn the importance of the many migratory and indigenous birds that inhabit the mangroves.

Days 7 & 8 British Virgin Islands. These islands are recognised throughout the seafaring world as one of the finest sailing areas. The 36 islands and cays sit in a dazzling turquoise sea surrounded by beautiful coral reefs. We have a day and half here and will drop anchor and use our Zodics to explore. We may make calls at the islands of Virgin Gorda, Jost Van Dyke and Tortola but if time and weather permit we also hope to make an expedition call onto one of the small uninhabited islands.

Day 9 Saint Eustatius. In the 18th century the port of Oranjestad was a major player in the trade between Europe and the new world. Today the island maintains a low key existence and has avoided the modernisation and development of her neighbours. We will explore the small town including the 17th century fort and the museum with information on slavery, colonial relics and historical artefacts. Meanwhile, the more active may wish to take the strenuous hike to “The Quill” the 600 metre hill that dominates the landscape. This afternoon is free to explore at leisure and shuttle buses will be available to take you to the town or to one of the local beaches.

Day 10 St Kitts & Nevis. We will make a landing this morning on the delightful island of St Kitts. This lovely island has it all, restful green fields of sugar cane plantations, rainforests and long stretches of uncrowded beaches. The atmosphere here is wonderfully relaxed and full of old-world charm. Either wander the streets of Basseterre including the colonial buildings or see the impressive UNESCO fortress at Brimstone Hill. This 18th century British garrison played a key role in the battles with the French and is situated on a hill offering fine views over to Nevis to where we will sail over lunch. The island of Nevis featured significantly in Nelson’s time in the West Indies. It was here that he met Fanny Nisbet and later married her in the old Montpelier House, on the site where a hotel now stands. On an island drive we will stop at the Nelson Museum and also the Botanical Gardens.

Day 11 Antigua. A onetime British colony, Antigua is justly famous for its beaches, said to total more than 300. We have a day here and on a morning tour will enjoy the views from Shirley Heights before heading to Nelson’s Dockyard, beautifully located in English Harbour. See the impressive collection of restored historic buildings which were occupied by the British Navy from 1707 till 1899. In the afternoon either spend time in St Johns, on one of the local beaches or join a cricketing tour of the island including the Sir Vivian Richards Stadium, Stanford Cricket Ground and the Antigua Cricket Ground (ARG). Keith Fredericks (Freddo), a cricketer who represented Antigua at regional level and Head Groundsman at the ARG will delight in giving a talk and guided tour of the club house and the ground. Finally before returning to the vessel there...
will be a private appearance by one of Antigua’s cricket West Indian Legends.

Day 12 Montserrat. Ask any Caribbean connoisseur about their favourite places and Montserrat will always be high on the list. Following the damaging volcanic eruptions of 1995 and 2010, much of the island is now returning to normal. We will visit the volcano observatory and learn how the islanders coped with the devastation it caused. Even now we will drive through areas where volcanic material lies in the roads. We also see some of the untouched areas which are as beautiful as ever and if weather permits we will cruise by the destroyed town of Plymouth.

Day 13 Dominica. Stepping back in time, the island of Dominica is still the primitive garden that Columbus first sighted in 1493. An area of tropical rainforests, flowers of incredible beauty and animals that exist nowhere else in the world. No doubt in time this lovely place will succumb to the developers but for now it is a place of beauty and solitude. We arrive this morning in the small port of Cabrits, just below the national park and the former British garrison of Fort Shirley. We have a few options today, the active can climb to the Fort to explore the ruins, visit the small museum and maybe wander the surrounding trails on the lookout for birds, hermit crabs and lizards. For the keen birders we will offer a tour driving through the plantations to the Morne Diablotin National Park where from the viewpoint we hope to see the two endemic parrots of Dominica. Alternatively join a local boat for a journey along the Indian River, a mangrove lined creek with interesting bankside vegetation including gnarled tree roots and which is home to herons, egrets, hummingbirds and iguanas.

Day 14 St Lucia. A splendidly rugged island of towering mountains, lush green valleys and acres of banana plantations. We will moor in sight of the island's best known feature, the twin peaks of the Pitons, which rise dramatically from the sea to more than 2400 feet. In the nearby town of Soufriere we can visit the bubbling sulphur springs, part of a low lying volcano which erupted thousands of years ago. Our island tour will also include the splendid botanical gardens, a delight for photographers with walkways surrounded by bright tropical flowers and towering trees, and one of the local plantations where we learn about cacao production.

Day 15 Barbados to London. Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

Day 16 London. Arrive this morning.

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**PRICES PER PERSON**

Based on double occupancy

**SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £500 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY**

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Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, 14 nights aboard the MS Serenissima on a full board basis with house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner onboard, Noble Caledonia onboard team, shore excursions, gratuities, transfers, port taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, visas.

**Ship to Shore:** Please note that although this cruise is not classified as an expedition cruise, the vessel will be at anchor and Zodiaks used to transport passengers ashore in all ports with the exception of Kingston, Fort Antonio, Santiago de Cuba, Puerto Plata, St Kitts, Antigua and Barbados where we will be alongside.

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**Escape the British winter and discover destinations with teeming rainforests, cool cloud forests, beautiful beaches, remarkably diverse landscapes, pristine coral reefs, magnificently diverse wildlife and fascinating cultures and history.**
The handsome MS Serenissima began her career as Harald Jarl, cruising the Norwegian coastline and fjords. Extensively renovated in 2003 she was rechristened MS Andrea and began her career as a classic cruise ship, and was chartered by Noble Caledonia for a number of years. In spring 2012 MS Andrea was purchased by our long-standing associates Volga Dream and renamed the MS Serenissima. After a thorough renovation and upgrading, the charming MS Serenissima commenced cruise operations in April 2013 and since then we have chartered her for multiple voyages. With her small size she can navigate into small, remote ports inaccessible to the big cruise ships. She appears an impressive sight when moored, and is capable of both destination and expedition cruising.

Your Space
The facilities onboard include two lounges – the larger Andrea Lounge is comfortable and spacious and the smaller Harald Lounge is more intimate. There is also a small library with a computer for internet access and Wi-Fi is available at an extra cost throughout the vessel. The outside areas really are something special. A spacious observation deck allows 360 degree views of the passing scenery. From here, step down to the lido area with fitness room, Jacuzzi and outside bar. The newly built covered seating area at the back of deck 6 is ideal for relaxing with a drink in hand. Perhaps, one of the best known and loved features of this vessel is its unique style. During the major refit in Sweden the then owners commissioned Swedish interior designers to create a Gustavian style interior. This bright Swedish 18th century influenced, country house style works particularly well on a vessel of this vintage, providing intimacy and classic nautical sensibility often lacking in larger vessels.

Your Cabin/Suite
Accommodating no more than 100 passengers, the cabins are attractively designed for comfort and convenience. All cabins are fully air conditioned with an en-suite bathroom with shower and a selection of toiletries in addition to a hairdryer, robes and slippers. All cabins come equipped with telephone, flat screen television, safety deposit box and other thoughtful appointments. Bottles of still and sparkling water are replenished daily. There are ten different grades of cabin arranged over five decks, and with the exception of the inside cabins, all staterooms feature either windows or portholes. Because of the very nature of the ship, the cabins do vary in shape and size, adding to the vessel’s overall charm. Choose from the cosy inside cabins of approx 10 square metres, to the sumptuous newly built executive suites of 25 square metres boasting private balconies, minibar and all the mod cons.

Your Dining
The free seating Venice Restaurant accommodates all guests in one sitting. Being on deck 5, it has great views from all tables. The picture windows mean the restaurant is light and airy. Breakfast is served buffet-style with cooked dishes available and eggs to order by the ship’s accomplished chef. Lunch is also served buffet-style with hot and cold dishes available. Dinner is served a la carte and is 4 courses, except for at the Captain’s Dinner, which is a 6 course affair. Where possible, local produce is sourced for an authentic dining experience. A choice of red or white wine, beer, soft drinks, and water are included at lunch and dinner. In good weather there are al fresco dining facilities available and tea and coffee is available around the clock in the Andrea Lounge.