

# HISTORIC TOWNS & GARDENS OF ITALY

A voyage from Naples to Malta aboard the MS Hebridean Sky  
with Guest Speaker Caroline Holmes

7<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May 2025

SPECIAL  
OFFER - SAVE  
**£300**  
PER PERSON

NOBLE CALEDONIA





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.



## Guest Speaker – Caroline Holmes



Caroline Holmes is a garden historian of places, people and plants, a speaker, author of 12 books, TV and radio broadcaster and consultant designer who specialises in evoking historic, artistic and symbolic references. She has travelled extensively across, researched in and written on France and Italy, both rich sources of the harmony we find in architecture, gardens and music. Caroline has been a speaker on every continent except Antarctica, she is a lecturer for The Arts Society and is a Course Director for the University of Cambridge's

ICE International Summer Programme exploring English Houses and Gardens. She has lectured on many specialist tours around Florence, Siena and Rome. Garden design consultancies include: Humanist Renaissance inspired gardens for Notre Dame de Calais; Knots, Orchards and Operatic Borders for the Royal Opera House at High House, Essex; and devising the plantings and lore for the Poison Garden in The Alnwick Garden, Northumberland. She has devised two theatrical productions celebrating gardens *Impressionists in their Gardens – living light and colour* and *How does your garden grow Mr. Shakespeare?*







## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London or Manchester to Naples, Italy.** 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 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 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,



## Post-cruise Malta Extension

15<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> May 2025

If you would like to spend some time in Malta after disembarking the MS Hebridean Sky we are offering the opportunity to enjoy a two night stay in Valletta.



## The Itinerary

**Day 1 Valletta, Malta.** After breakfast we will disembark and begin a walking tour of Valletta, the 16th century "Fortress City" built by the Knights of St John. Our morning tour will include the highlights of Valletta with its stunning views across the harbour from the Barrakka Gardens. After lunch we transfer to our hotel and check in. The remainder of the afternoon and evening is free for independent exploration. (B, L)

**Day 2 Mdina.** A morning tour will take us to Mdina. Originally this city was given the name of "Citta Nobile", and it is now known as the "Silent City" at the heart of the island. Mdina is Phoenician in origin and was the fortified capital of the island before the arrival of the Knights. Spend the afternoon at leisure before we meet for dinner. (B, D)

**Day 3 Valletta to London or Manchester.** Check out and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight. (B)

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin: **£895** Single: **£1145**

**Price Includes:** Two nights hotel accommodation, meals as indicated (B - Breakfast, L - Lunch, D - Dinner), tours as described, Noble Caledonia Tour Manager, gratuities, transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

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

**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.

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

#### SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £300 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Amundsen	Standard	£5595	£5295
Byrd	Superior	£5795	£5495
Mawson	Premium	£5995	£5695
Mawson	Corner	£6295	£5995
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£6795	£6495
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£6995	£6695
Shackleton	Hebridean	£7395	£7095
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£6595	£6295
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£6795	£6495

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Eight nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Noble Caledonia onboard team including Guest Speaker • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.





# MS HEBRIDEAN SKY



Alfresco Dining



Owner's Balcony Suite



The Restaurant

The much loved MS Hebridean Sky is one of our two flagships and sister vessel to the MS Island Sky. Both vessels were built in the same shipyard in Italy at similar times and share the same excellent attributes that make them two of the finest small ships in the world. With a maximum passenger capacity of only 118, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Hebridean Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks.

## Your Suite

On board there are 59 exceptionally spacious and well-designed suites. All feature a sitting 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 with those on the Scott and Shackleton Decks featuring private balconies. Each suite affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring 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, television and a telephone in each suite. Refillable water bottles, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted Molton Brown toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be.

## Your Dining

With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the cuisine on board the MS Hebridean Sky is of a consistent superior quality that befits such a vessel. In keeping with the informal atmosphere on board, when dining you are able to choose your seating arrangements and choice of restaurants at your leisure; whether that be joining a table of four to six other passengers in the elegant à la carte Restaurant or, outside buffet-style on the Lido Deck in the evening sunshine. In the main Restaurant, breakfast is served buffet-style, with certain items cooked to order on request. Lunch and dinner menus offer plenty of choice, often reflecting the daily catch and local delicacies. The Welcome and Farewell dinners are a sumptuous five course affair. To enhance your dining experience further a selection of wines is included with both meals. Afternoon tea and pre-dinner canapés take place in either the comfort of the Lounge or out on the Lido Deck when the weather is favourable. Tea and coffee are also available 24 hours a day. Special diets can be catered for with sufficient notice.



The Library



Superior Suite



The Club

## Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large Lounge on the Byrd Deck featuring a selection of seating options from individual armchairs and sofas to side cushioned benches. Daily briefings given by the Cruise Director and talks from Guest Speakers and expedition staff take place in the Lounge. In addition to the main Lounge, there is also The Club, located on the Mawson Deck which features the main bar. The Club also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. Towards the aft of the ship on the Mawson Deck is the Library. Well stocked with reference books pertaining to the destinations the vessel is visiting and a selection of essential reads, you will not find yourself short of excellent literature on board. A collection of games and devices to access the internet via the ship's satellite can also be found in the library. Access to the ship's satellite Wi-Fi via your own device is complimentary on board (*signal strength varies depending on location and demand*). The main Restaurant, which can seat all guests at one sitting, is located on the Amundsen Deck, and outside there is a rear Lido Deck located on the Scott Deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. Further to this on the top Shackleton Deck there is an observation area, complete with sun loungers for sunbathing, relaxing with a book or catching up with fellow travellers. The Promenade Deck wraps around the whole ship providing outstanding views. There is also a small beauty salon on board with appointments made on request.

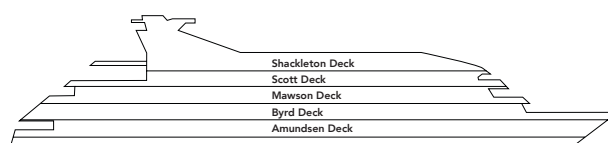
## Your Comfort

The MS Hebridean Sky is equipped with the latest safety, navigation and communications equipment along with roll stabilisers to minimise the ship's motion. During your voyage we hope to offer you the opportunity to visit the Captain and Officers on the Bridge to check the vessel's progress by charts and learn more about your journey. On board you will also find a clinic and Doctor and a lift that serves all decks. When at anchor our nimble Zodiacs will ferry you ashore or, on select cruises, enjoy Zodiac cruises getting you closer to the natural world.

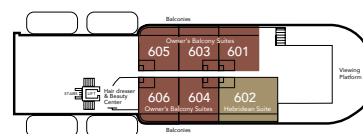
## Your Life On Board

The atmosphere on board is warm and convivial and more akin to a private yacht or country hotel in which you can learn more about the wonderful destinations you are visiting in the company of like-minded people. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers and our friendly crew of 75 are mainly Filipino and Eastern European and our Captains are experienced mariners. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well-run and exceedingly comfortable ship where peace, high quality of service and attention to detail are the order of the day. A little music in the Lounge or bar after dinner, Guest Speakers and informative port briefings and of course good food, all contribute to make any voyage aboard this wonderful vessel a memorable and joyful experience.

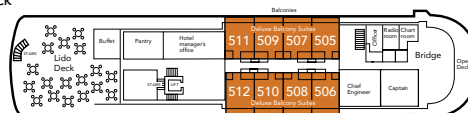
## MS HEBRIDEAN SKY DECK PLAN



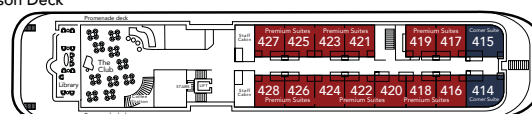
### Shackleton Deck



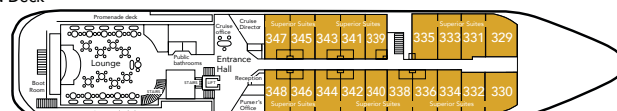
### Scott Deck



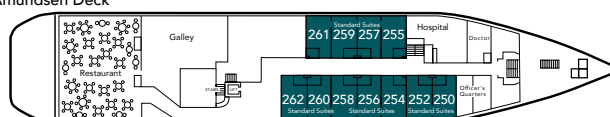
### Mawson Deck



### Byrd Deck



### Amundsen Deck



- Standard Suites
- Corner Suites
- Owner's Balcony Suites
- Superior Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Hebridean Suite
- Premium Suites

Please note that beds in each suite can be configured as double or twin with the exception of suites 601 and 602 which feature a fixed double bed.



# NOBLE CALEDONIA

2 Chester Close, Belgravia, London, SW1X 7BE  
+44 (0)20 7752 0000 | [info@noble-caledonia.co.uk](mailto:info@noble-caledonia.co.uk)  
[www.noble-caledonia.co.uk](http://www.noble-caledonia.co.uk)



All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
Cover image: Church of Santa Maria dell'Isola, Tropea.