

SPECIAL  
OFFER - SAVE  
**£200**  
PER PERSON

# INDIAN OCEAN ISLAND ODYSSEY

An expedition from Mauritius to Mahe including Madagascar  
aboard the MS Serenissima

20<sup>th</sup> February to 8<sup>th</sup> March 2022



NOBLE CALEDONIA



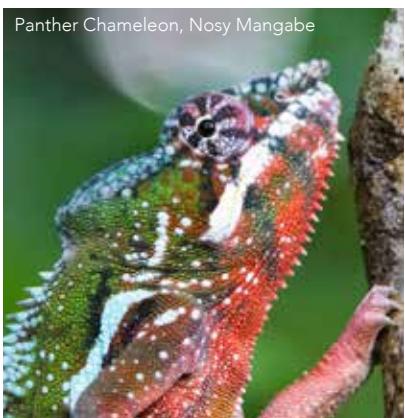
Giant Tortoise



Landing by Zodiac



Flightless Aldabra Rail



Panther Chameleon, Nosy Mangabe

**J**oin us for this island hopping expedition through the Indian Ocean which will appeal to those who enjoy the natural world and all its wonders, travelling on small ships and staying clear of the well-beaten tourist tracks. The delightful MS Serenissima with her fleet of Zodiac landing craft is the perfect vessel for such an enterprise. With just 95 guests she is a far cry from the latest breed of cruise ships and can visit small islands and backwaters that are denied to larger vessels. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by the expert crew and officers, who along with our expedition team of marine biologists, ornithologists and botanists have many years of experience in the Indian Ocean and will provide commentary on all we see.

Setting sail from Mauritius we will land on its nearest neighbour, Reunion, a little bit of France in the Indian Ocean and a truly stunning place. We will spend the day exploring its truly awesome and dramatic landscape before continuing to Madagascar where we will have four days to explore the incredible verdant and beautiful island and its unique flora and fauna. Continuing to the Seychelles, for many the highlight of the voyage will be our time spent exploring the Aldabra Islands, the last breeding ground of the giant tortoise and in addition to seeing some of these endearing creatures we should also encounter dolphins, turtles and whales as well as countless birds including the flightless rail, the last flightless bird in

the Indian Ocean. To explore the abundant crystal clear waters of the vast lagoon and to set foot on atolls which have never been exploited by the hand of man is a rare experience.

This itinerary is a veritable feast of beauty and the natural world. You will witness the bounty of the islands, the wildlife from the lemurs of Madagascar to the giant tortoises of Aldabra, an amazingly prolific birdlife and a mesmerising underwater life.



Turtle



Curieuse



Masoala National Park

## What to Expect

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from last season which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

**Nosy Mangabe:** This morning we were anchored off the Masoala Peninsula and we disembarked the long and 'birder' walks first followed by the medium and short walks on a beautiful golden beach backed by primary rainforest. Once ashore we were on the lookout for creatures big and small, and we found them. The lemurs appeared, racing through the treetops. The inquisitive white-fronted brown lemurs came and had a good look at us. Frogs were everywhere. There were the green-backed mantellas, quite brash in their black and green colours and tiny nondescript frogs laying their single egg in the stumps of bamboo. There were several leaf-tailed geckos which were so well camouflaged that they were almost impossible to see even at close range. We needn't have walked far from the landing stage at all. As we were starting to leave the lemurs came down to check us out and allowed for some great close up photographs. On walks inland, there were huge boulders of 3.2 billion year old granodiorite to be seen. The afternoon offered us an opportunity to land at the camp for a second time for an exploratory walk or a long Zodiac cruise down the peninsula. Both options were rewarded with excellent sightings of lemurs, chameleons and a variety of bird species. We were all back on board for a quick recap followed by dinner. Those who chose to dine outside were rewarded with a lovely sunset and the noises of the rainforest as we relocated to the Masoala Peninsula that evening.

**Cosmoledo:** At first light the scout boat set out to the west to search for potential snorkel sites. Within minutes we had spinner dolphins bow riding. The 'Special Booby Squad' set off first with Guy to the far western end of Ile du Sud. Here, in a sheltered bay they could step ashore at the best masked booby colony in the Seychelles: birds everywhere, and these immaculate black and white birds swooping low overhead or sitting tight on the ground on two pure white eggs. The rest of us set off into the main passage, landing on a mile-long coral sand beach on the inner shore of Wizard Island. Perfect turquoise waters in which to swim, the sun rising in a perfectly clear sky, and to add that little touch of genius, a Zodiac came ashore with kitchen crew, their striped parasol and a cold box containing three different flavours of ice cream! Some walked the length of the beach, others fell asleep in the shade of beach crest bushes, the energetic castaways explored inland and found two new birds: the Madagascar cisticola and Abbott's sunbird, the latter gorging on nectar in the high heads of flowering sisal bushes. A view from the high dunes showed turtles mating at sea and numerous turtle nest mounds on the outer shore.

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Port Louis, Mauritius.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Port Louis.** Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Serenissima in Port Louis. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail tonight.

**Day 3 Reunion Island.** We arrive at breakfast in Reunion where we have a choice of excursions. On a full day tour 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. The rich soil and mellow climate produce a lush and verdant landscape which is dotted with villages and towns with a uniquely French atmosphere. We will enjoy views from the Nez des Bœufs and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant visit the "Cité du Volcan" museum.

Alternatively, enjoy a morning tour to a vanilla plantation in St Andre where we learn about the history and culture of this integral part of Reunion's heritage. We will also enjoy some free time in St Denis before returning to the MS Serenissima for lunch and an afternoon at leisure before we sail this evening.

**Day 4 At Sea.** Spend the day at sea as we sail to Madagascar.

### Day 5 Taomasina, Madagascar.

Our first call in Madagascar is at Taomasina, the country's main port and second largest city but also the gateway to the Pangalanes Canals, a series of rivers, waterways and lakes that extend for over 400 miles down the island's east coast. Used mainly for transportation and fishing, the canals are also home to unspoiled beaches, lagoons and lakes whilst providing access to national parks and private reserves. This morning we will use local boats to cruise along the canal and enjoy the scenery followed by a nature walk in one of the private reserves. Take lunch in the reserve before returning to Taomasina this afternoon.

Alternatively, visit the Ivohaina Zoological Parc, a 282 hectare property combining a small zoo where we will see up to 12 species of lemur as well as indigenous tortoises and chameleons. Meanwhile in the surrounding forests we can see wild lemurs or malachite kingfishers on one of the many walking trails.

**Days 6 & 7 Nosy Mangabe & Masoala National Park.** Spend a day and a half in the Antongil Bay area. Here we discover Nosy Mangabe, a 520-hectare island reserve and 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 will offer a series of nature walks looking at the varied trees, plants



Ring-tailed Lemur

and ferns and we 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. We also explore Madagascar's largest protected area, the Masoala National Park, which comprises of coastal rainforest, flooded forests, marsh and mangroves. Mammal species encountered include the red-ruffed lemur, the red-fronted brown lemur and the ring-tailed mongoose. The park is also home to various species of brightly coloured Mantella frogs, all manner of extraordinary chameleons and is a refuge of the endangered Madagascar red-owl, Madagascar serpent eagle and many endemic bird species. A series of walks for all levels will operate and there will also be the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

**Day 8 Diego Suarez.** After a morning at sea we enter dramatic Diego Suarez, a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. This afternoon choose from a city tour visiting the Commonwealth Cemetery and Place Joffre, or the Malagasy Rain Forest at the Mount Amber National Park. Dividing into short and long walk parties we will go in search of lemurs, chameleons and endemic birds as we explore the rainforest.

**Days 9 to 11 Aldabra Islands, Seychelles.** After a morning at sea we arrive at the Aldabra group of islands where we have two and a half days to explore. Our itinerary will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain who will monitor the local conditions to ensure we maximise our time here. Whilst our itinerary is flexible, we hope to call at the island of Assumption which was ruthlessly plundered for its vast deposits of guano in the early 20th century. Happily, peace has returned, and the wildlife of rare birds and green turtles are once again in abundance. Our time here will be spent beachcombing, on a nature walk or snorkelling. We also hope to reach Cosmoledo where a huge ring of twelve islands circle a lagoon. Many of the atolls are still to be surveyed and we will explore some of them by Zodiac. This is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area with all three species of booby found in the Seychelles including the last breeding site for the brown booby. Also spot sooty terns and great frigate birds. We will also spend time on Aldabra, the island referred to by Sir Julian Huxley as "One of nature's treasures and should belong to the whole world". Aldabra is unique and every time we call at what is believed to be the world's largest atoll we find something new of interest. Sightings have been made of the extremely rare white-throated rail and the atoll is also home to the world's second

largest colony of frigate birds and to the largest crab, the coconut crab. Whilst exploring by Zodiac it is difficult to know in which direction to look. The clear blue seas abound with life, the skies are alive with varied birdlife and ashore giant land tortoises forage as they have done for millions of years. We hope to explore Picard Island with a short walk to see some of the thousands of tortoises and numerous robber crabs or swim in the lagoon, a vast 17 mile stretch of shallow clear water. From our Zodiacs we can watch the ever-changing undersea world and snorkel in colourful coral waters.

**Day 12 At Sea.** Enjoy a relaxing day at sea as we head to the Inner Seychelles islands. Our lecture programme will continue or maybe find a spot on deck to watch for wildlife.

**Day 13 Amirante Islands.** This morning we arrive at the 28 islands in the Amirante Group of islands which were discovered by Vasco de Gama in 1501 and are considered to be some of the most pristine and untouched islands in the world. If conditions permit, we will spend the day on Desroches, the largest of the islands although still only measuring six kilometres by 1.5 kilometres. Enjoy nature walks with our naturalists and the island's conservation team observing the flora and fauna and in particular the giant tortoises and nesting turtles. Meanwhile keen snorkellers will have the chance to swim over the outlying coral.

**Days 14 & 15 Inner Seychelles.** Our final two days will be spent exploring the islands of the Inner

Seychelles and we hope to include a call at Praslin to explore the 'Vallee de Mai', the last remnant of the original high canopied Seychelles palm forest and home to the coco de mer. We will walk its paths looking out for the rare black parrot and enjoying its natural beauty. See Grande Soeur, an idyllic uninhabited island. Spend time walking the island trails which link the island's white sand beaches and maybe catch sight of some of the giant Aldabra tortoises or enjoy a snorkelling opportunity in the turquoise waters. We hope to anchor off Aride, one of the finest and most important seabird islands in the Indian Ocean. Over one million seabirds breed on the island including tropical shearwater, lesser noddy, frigatebirds and roseate tern and five of the species are unique to the Seychelles such as the Seychelles warbler and Seychelles magpie robin. The island is largely covered in native woodland including the endemic wright's gardenia, a shrub with beautifully scented flowers found nowhere else in the world. Sail to Curieuse, a rugged island which was once home to a leper colony and now houses an eco-museum and visitor centre. The island is an important nesting site for hawksbill turtles and boasts endemic vine and mangroves which we explore on an island walk.

**Day 16 Mahe to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

**Day 17 London.** Arrive this morning.

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

### SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £200 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Cat	Cabin Description	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
2	Standard Stateroom	£8195	£7995
3	Classic Stateroom	£8495	£8295
4	Superior Stateroom	£8795	£8595
5	Deluxe Stateroom	£9195	£8995
6	Junior Suite	£9695	£9495
7	Owner's Suite	£9995	£9795
8	Serenissima Suite	£10195	£9995
10	Standard Single	£8995	£8795

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 14 nights aboard the MS Serenissima on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance, Madagascan visa.

# MS SERENISSIMA



Harald Jarl Lounge



Venice Restaurant



Andrea Lounge

The charming MS Serenissima began her career as the Harald Jarl, cruising the Norwegian coastline and fjords. Since 2003, when she was extensively renovated, she has been operating as a classic cruise ship. Previously known as the MS Andrea, she was upgraded again in 2013 and started her new life as the MS Serenissima. With her small size she can navigate into small, remote ports inaccessible to the big cruise ships and appears an impressive sight when moored. With her fleet of Zodiacs, she is capable of both destination and expedition cruising.

## Your Cabin/Suite

Accommodating no more than 95 passengers, there are eight different grades of cabins arranged over five decks, and all feature either windows or portholes. The cabins are attractively designed for comfort and convenience. All cabins are fully air conditioned with an en-suite bathroom with shower (please note cabins 601 - 605 and 507 have a bath with shower attachment) 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. Refillable water bottles are available in all cabins for use on board. Due to the very nature of the ship, the cabins vary in shape and size, adding to the vessel's overall charm.



## Your Dining

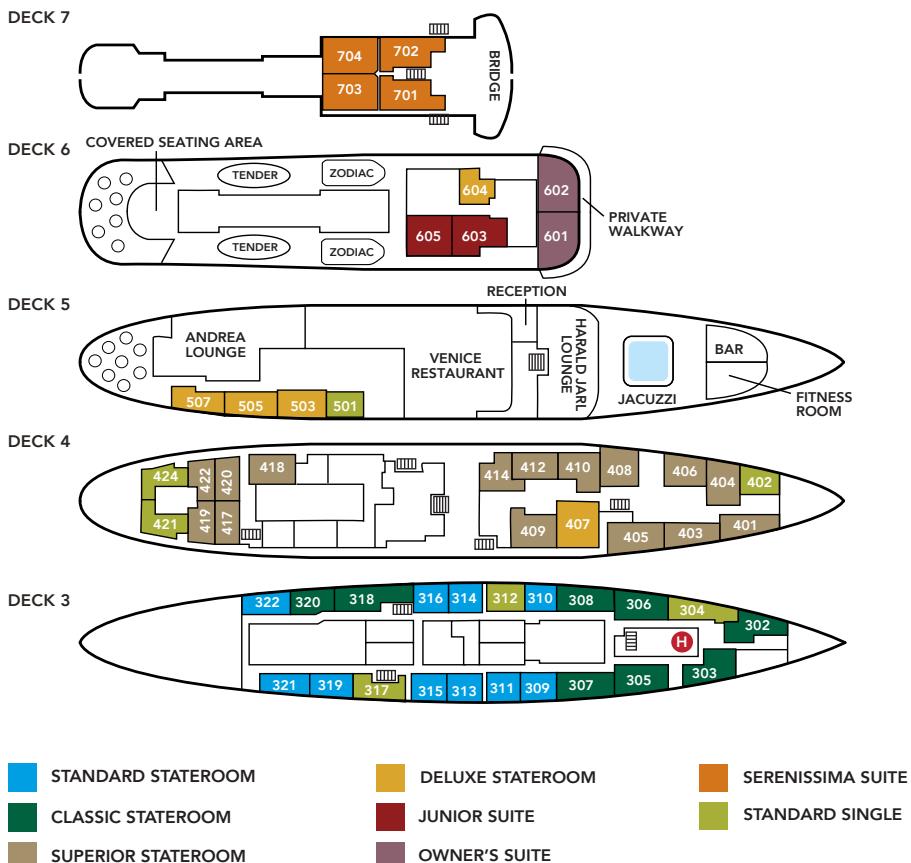
The free seating Venice Restaurant accommodates all guests in one sitting and, with its Deck 5 location, all of the tables benefit from great views. The picture windows also make the restaurant wonderfully light and airy. Breakfast is served buffet-style with cooked dishes available and eggs to order by the ship's accomplished chef. Lunch is also served buffet-style

with hot and cold dishes available. Dinner is served à la carte and is four courses, except at the Captain's Dinner, which is a six course affair. Where possible, local produce is sourced for an authentic dining experience. A choice of red or white wine, beer and soft drinks is included at lunch and dinner. In good weather there are al fresco dining facilities available and tea and coffee are available around the clock in the Andrea Lounge.

## Your Space

The facilities on board include two lounges – the larger Andrea Lounge is comfortable and spacious and the smaller Harald Jarl Lounge is more intimate. There is also a small library 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 Jacuzzi and outside bar. The 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 country house style which has recently been updated with some Art Deco styling which works particularly well on a vessel of this vintage, providing intimacy and a classic nautical sensibility often lacking in larger vessels.

## MS SERENISSIMA DECK PLAN & CABINS



**SERENISSIMA SUITE**  
(25 square metres)



**OWNER'S SUITE**  
(22 square metres)



**JUNIOR SUITE**  
(21 square metres)

NB. Please note cabin sizes vary in each category and measurements shown are approximate.



**DELUXE STATEROOM**  
(15 to 25 square metres)



**SUPERIOR STATEROOM**  
(11.5 to 18 square metres)



**CLASSIC STATEROOM**  
(14 to 19 square metres)



**STANDARD STATEROOM**  
(10 to 11.5 square metres)



**STANDARD SINGLE**  
(7 to 12.5 square metres)

During this voyage you will be visiting out of the way destinations and will be accompanied by an expedition team.



Landings and excursions will be made by Zodiac landing craft. This cruise will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.



## NOBLE CALEDONIA

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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.

Cover image: Kingfisher, Masoala National Park.