

NOBLE CALEDONIA

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ISLAND HOPPING IN THE  
**SEYCHELLES**

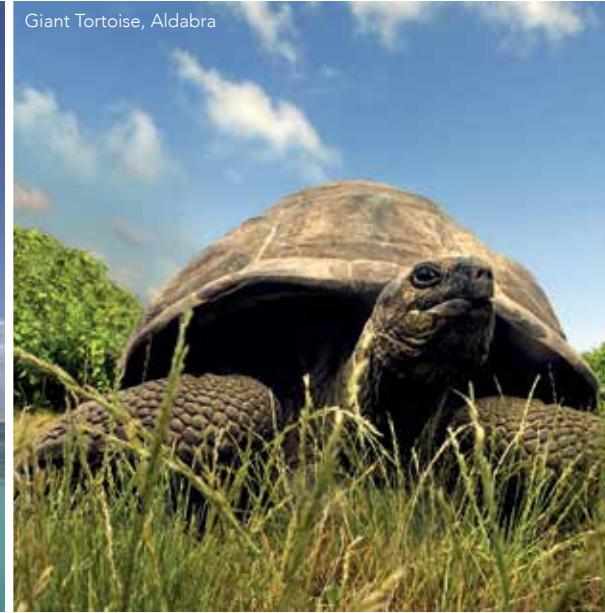
AN EXPEDITION THROUGH THE BEAUTIFUL SEYCHELLES  
TO TANZANIA ABOARD THE MS SERENISSIMA

7<sup>TH</sup> TO 23<sup>RD</sup> DECEMBER 2019

Red-footed Booby, Cosmoledo



Giant Tortoise, Aldabra



**J**oin us aboard the delightful MS Serenissima as we explore the bountiful islands of the Indian Ocean. The Seychelles offers the visitor a tropical beauty that is difficult, if not impossible to match anywhere else in the world. Spread out over a vast area of the Indian Ocean, they offer everything from quiet sophistication and enchanting scenery to wild and uninhabited nature reserves, where the very remoteness of the islands has protected them from the worst excesses of mankind. We know the region well having operated vessels here for the past twenty five years, and those who have sailed with us through these extraordinary waters have experienced the magic of dropping anchor off a remote atoll at first light and venturing ashore by Zodiac, landing on a deserted beach to discover the rich bird and marine life, the exotic flora, nature reserves and working estates.

If ever there was a region perfect for expedition cruising it is here and the MS Serenissima is the perfect size and equipped vessel for our voyage. Our journey will include all aspects of this extraordinary island nation from the developed Inner Seychelles with staggeringly beautiful islands such as Praslin and La Digue to the less known and rarely visited Outer Seychelles. Here we will sail all the way to Aldabra, the world's largest coral atoll and a World Heritage Site. Being one of the most difficult places in the world to access and having a lack of freshwater has saved Aldabra from any tourism development and only small vessels like the MS Serenissima are allowed to visit. It is therefore a great privilege to be able to land on the untouched beaches of Aldabra, the breeding ground for thousands of giant tortoise and home to some of the rarest birds 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.



## 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 recent ship logs to provide you with an understanding of what you can expect from such an expedition:*

**Cosmoledo:** Today we had another day in the Aldabra group this time to the island of Cosmoledo. Like the other islands of the Aldabra group this is an uplifted coral island. It was an early start due to the tide times and at 7:30am the flotilla of Zodiacs made the journey into the mouth of the atoll, across the lagoon to the eastern shore. Once we arrived the site was wondrous. Thousands of nesting birds sitting on the coral rock. They were mostly boobies, both red footed and masked, but there were also species of herons, terns, noddies, frigate birds and tropic birds. The sea was also full of turtles. There seemed to be hundreds darting about in the shallow water. The Zodiacs took

their time passing up the shore, allowing plenty of bird photos to be taken. We then found little patches of beach to land on and to have a small walk about or a little swim or paddle. All the while the tide was quickly dropping and the beaches were becoming larger and larger. Soon it was time to head back to the ship and set sail for the Farquhar Group of islands. Once back aboard we enjoyed lunch, followed by great talk all about the biology of coral reefs.

**Aride & La Digue:** Aride is a nature reserve famed for its birdlife. The intrepid birders set out early and were rewarded with the sight of birds that were totally unafraid of man, many of them at very close range. The birds were certainly friendly as were the two species of skink. White-tailed tropicbirds swooped through the woodland and crash landed in the shrubbery on their way to their nests, their landing technique a stark contrast to their grace in flight. The fairy terns sat on their branches and met us eye to eye. Most people got to see the fluffy little chicks, hatched on a bare branch and now moving around,

waiting for their feathers to grow so that they could fly. Seychelles fodies were everywhere while common moorhens ran around in the undergrowth, far away from water. This afternoon we were back in our trusty Zodiacs for a short ride to a very civilised landing on a floating pontoon inside the busy little harbour at La Digue. Here we boarded our camionettes, converted trucks with seats in the back, for our tour of the island. The more adventurous among us boarded bicycles and headed off to explore independently. We drove through the little village of La Passe, full of weaving bicycles, to the l'Union Estate where we were shown all the processes used in exploiting the coconuts, from dehusking to the copra kiln and the coconut oil mill, powered by a very patient and placid bull. We were also taken to the original old plantation house. We clambered back aboard our camionettes for a short ride to the beach at L'Anse Source d'Argent for a swim. The beach is famous, much photographed because of the dramatic contrast of rugged granite boulders, white sand and clear blue sea.



## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Mahe, Seychelles.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Mahe.** Arrive today and transfer to the MS Serenissima for embarkation. Enjoy Welcome Drinks and Dinner as we remain moored overnight.

**Day 3 Aride & Curieuse.** Sail in the early morning to 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, frigate birds and roseate tern in addition to five species 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. We will sail over lunch 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 will explore on an island walk.

**Day 4 Praslin & La Digue.** From our overnight anchorage we will land on 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. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail the short distance to La Digue where huge granite boulders lie like giant sculptures on the brilliant white beaches of the island. Tour the forested nature reserve and the L'Union Estate, a superbly

restored 19th century colonial house. Rent a bicycle, relax or swim from one of the beaches.

**Day 5 Amirante Islands.** The 28 islands in the Amirante Group of islands were discovered by Vasco de Gama in 1501 and are considered to be some of the most pristine and untouched islands in the world. We hope to spend time on Desroches, the largest of the islands, although still only measuring six kilometres by 1.5 kilometres. Enjoy nature walks with our onboard naturalists and the island's conservation team observing the flora and fauna and in particular the giant tortoises and nesting turtles. Keen snorkellers will have the chance to swim over the outlying coral.

**Day 6 Alphonse Islands.** There are three islands in the Alphonse group which is located directly south of the Amirantes. As we approach the islands over lunch you will understand why they are regarded by many to be the most beautiful of the 115 islands in the Seychelles archipelago. On the main island the circular lagoon offers good snorkelling and there are a number of tracks across the island to enjoy island walks.

**Day 7 Farquhar Islands.** After a morning at sea we will anchor off Farquhar over lunch where we will use our Zodiacs to explore the sparkling lagoon of this remote atoll ringed island of coconut and casuarina trees. Hawksbill and green sea turtles come to the atoll to nest, and several of the Farquhar Group's islands are Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas. The island is a haven providing us with a delightful afternoon of bird watching or snorkelling.

**Days 8 to 10 Aldabra Islands.** We have two and a half days to enjoy the Aldabra group of islands and 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 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 the 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 11 At Sea.** Our lecture programme continues as we spend the day at sea sailing towards Tanzania.

**Day 12 Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania.** Our first call in Tanzania will be at Kilwa Kisiwani, a site of exceptional historical interest, where the atmospheric ruins represent a wide sweep of East African coastal history, from the heights of the Swahili and Shirazi trading civilisation to the darker days of slavery and the uprisings against German rule. Once one of Africa's wealthiest towns, Kilwa Kisiwani is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and contains the world's most extensive and best preserved Swahili ruins. On a morning walking tour we will see the prominent fort and the Great Mosque which stood at the heart of the ancient city and was once the largest in East Africa. Return to the ship for lunch and spend the afternoon at leisure or join members of the expedition team on one of the nearby beaches.

**Day 13 Mafia Island.** Once a prominent stopover for ships on the trade routes from East Africa, Mafia Island has not seen the same development as nearby Zanzibar and remains relatively unknown and off the major tourist trail but is a wonderful spot to spend the day. There will be a choice of tours today. Take a dhow across to the charming islet of Chole with its small community where we will visit the sanctuary for Comoros flying foxes, the 12th century Arabic ruins overgrown by vines, and a traditional boat yard after which we can enjoy a cooling refreshment at the Red Herring bar. The village is traditionally famous for its weaving of the date palm fibres (ukindu) to



Exploring by Zodiac



Dhow near Zanzibar

Clownfish

Curieuse

## Christmas in Selous - Post-Cruise Extension 22<sup>nd</sup> to 27<sup>th</sup> December 2019



Lion cub, Selous Game Reserve

make brightly coloured baskets, placemats and floor mats which we will have the chance to purchase. Alternatively, for the more intrepid and agile, there will be the chance to embark local boats to search for whale sharks, and if conditions allow we may also be able to swim alongside them (please note this tour is weather dependent and numbers are limited).

**Days 14 & 15 Zanzibar.** Here the colourful harbour will be crowded with dhows, very much setting the scene for our visit to the Arab style city with its long narrow streets, bazaars, houses with overhanging balconies and intricately carved doorways. Out of town there are magnificent brilliant white sandy beaches and lush vegetation with plantations of cloves, cinnamon, vanilla and nutmeg which fill the air with heady aromas. We have two days on the island offering a number of touring options. Soak

up the timeless atmosphere of Stone Town including Livingstone House, Sultan's Palace, the slave market and the old fort. Visit a spice farm to experience the various fruits and spices cultivated on the island where you will find everything from jackfruit to coconuts, turmeric and vanilla to lipstick trees. There will also be the opportunity to visit the Jozani Forest which sustains a variety of wildlife and birds, including the rare red colobus monkey, indigenous to the island.

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

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

The Selous Game Reserve is home to over 1,000,000 large animals and over half of Tanzania's elephant population and one of the major attractions is the mighty Rufiji river, with one of the largest crocodile and hippo populations in Africa. The river has also formed several large lakes on its northern bank, navigable by boat Siwandu Camp is situated on one of these lakes, sheltered in a grove of one of Selous' many beautiful palm forests. Our stay coincides with the perfect season for bird and plant lovers, flowers will be in abundance and the deciduous trees are starting new growth. It is also the main reproductive time of year so a good time for seeing young animals.

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 Dar es Salaam to Selous.** Disembark after breakfast and transfer to the airport for our 45 minute scheduled flight to Mtemere Airstrip in the Selous Game Reserve. On arrival transfer to the Siwandu Camp and this afternoon enjoy your first game experience with a boat safari on the Rufiji River or on a nearby lake looking for hippos, crocodiles and birdlife. This evening enjoy dinner at the camp.

**Days 2 to 4 Siwandu Camp, Selous Game Reserve.** Enjoy two full days in the Reserve with included game drives each day. Maybe enjoy a full day game viewing in Selous Game Reserve with a picnic lunch or a half day walking safari through the bush with a ranger. Alternatively join another boat safari or simply relax in your tent. In the evening enjoy a delicious dinner at the camp.

**Day 5 Selous Game Reserve to Dar es Salaam.** Enjoy breakfast in the hotel and a final safari option before transferring to the airstrip for your flight to Dar es Salaam where we connect with our onward flight to London.

**Day 6 London.** Arrive this morning.

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin: £3995 Single: £4995

**Price Includes:** Four nights accommodation at Siwandu Camp on a full board basis, internal flights between Dar es Salaam and Selous Game Reserve, gratuities, transfers, taxes.

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

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

## SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £400 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

| Cat | Cabin Description  | Brochure Price | Special Offer Price |
|-----|--------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| 2   | Standard Stateroom | £7995          | £7595               |
| 3   | Classic Stateroom  | £8295          | £7895               |
| 4   | Superior Stateroom | £8495          | £8095               |
| 5   | Deluxe Stateroom   | £8795          | £8395               |
| 6   | Junior Suite       | £8995          | £8595               |
| 7   | Owner's Suite      | £9795          | £9395               |
| 8   | Serenissima Suite  | £10495         | £10095              |
| 10  | Standard Single    | £7995          | £7595               |

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

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

# MS SERENISSIMA



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. In December 2018, the vessel will once again undergo a significant refurbishment and, after a re-configuration of the deck plan will accommodate a maximum of just 95 guests.

## Your Cabin/Suite

Accommodating no more than 95 passengers, 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. Bottles of still and sparkling water are provided and replenished daily. From December 2018, there will be eight different grades of cabin arranged over five decks, and all 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.



## Your Dining

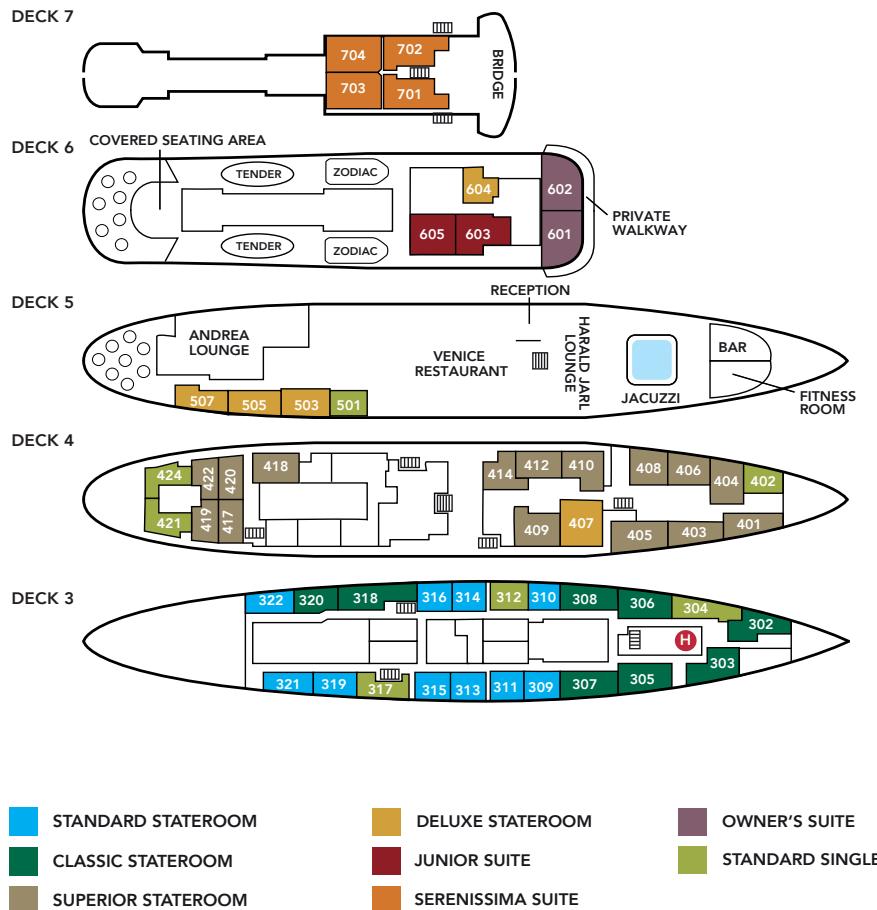
The free seating Venice Restaurant accommodates all guests in one sitting and, with its Deck 5 location, all of the tables benefit from great views. The picture windows also make the restaurant wonderfully light and airy. Breakfast is served buffet-style with cooked dishes available and eggs to order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

and cold dishes available. Dinner is served a 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, soft drinks, and water 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 Gustavian style interior. This bright Swedish 18th century influenced, country house style 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: La Digue, Seychelles