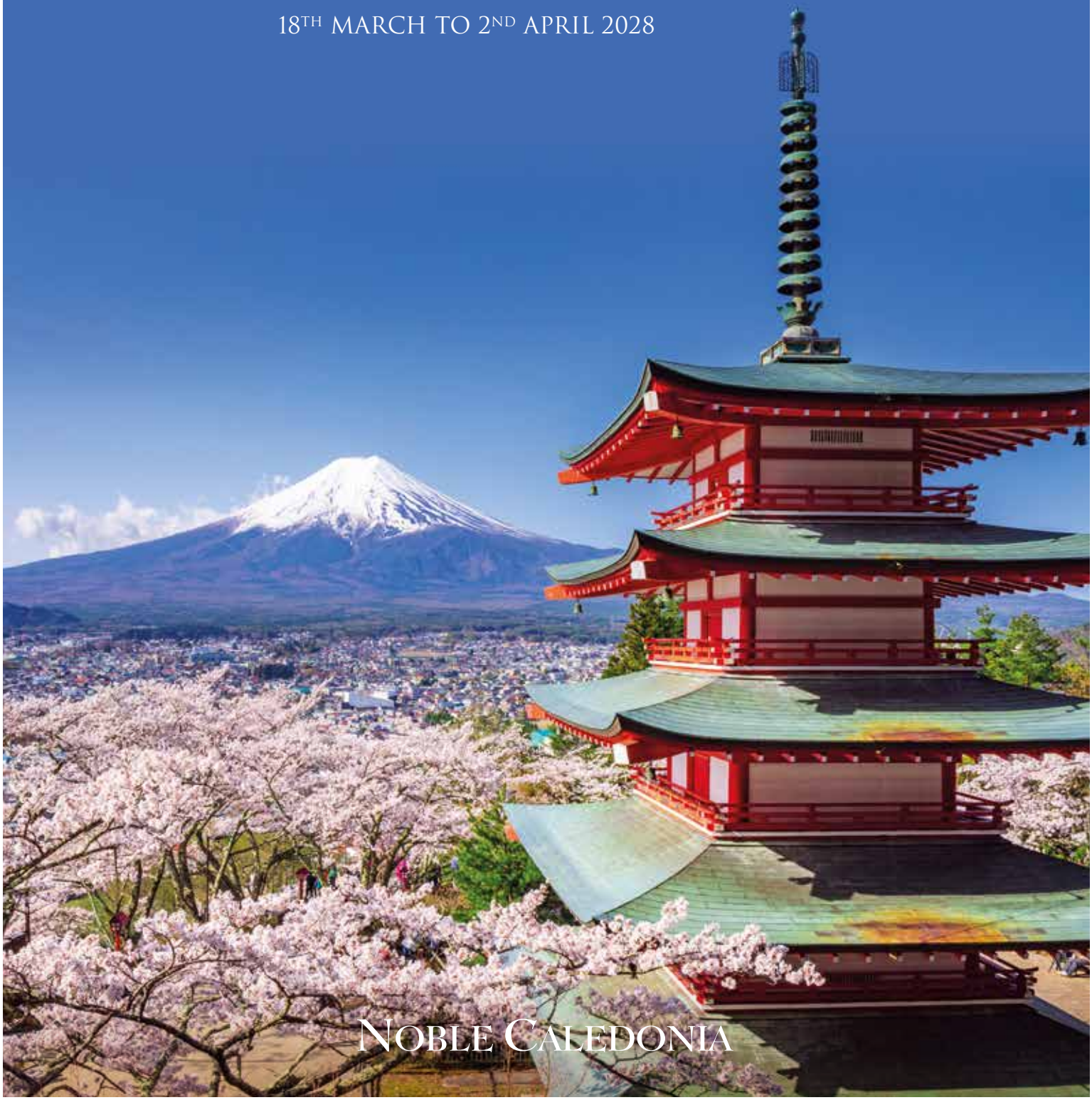
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ISLANDS, GARDENS & TEMPLES OF ANCIENT JAPAN

A FASCINATING VOYAGE FROM TAIWAN TO YOKOHAMA ABOARD THE MS ISLAND SKY

18TH MARCH TO 2ND APRIL 2028



NOBLE CALEDONIA

Join us aboard the MS Island Sky and immerse yourself in the mythology, history, culture and natural beauty of Taiwan and Japan. Our comprehensive journey from Taiwan through the Ryukyu and Kyushu islands and along Japan's Pacific coast offers a marvellous balance of ancient castles, beautiful gardens, opulent temples and shrines combined with spectacular natural landscapes. Like all well planned itineraries we have included some of the best known highlights, but equally will also take you to some places where relatively few foreign tourists set foot. With the MS Island Sky we are able to visit out of the way islands and remote stretches of coast which would not be practical on a regular land tour or a larger cruise ship, and it is in such places that we find timeless villages, rural landscapes and a rich cultural heritage.



Over the course of twelve nights we will encounter a wonderful variety of cultural and natural treasures. Our journey begins in Taiwan where we visit the vibrant capital, Taipei, and discover more about the island's fascinating history, from the Japanese colonial period to the era of Chiang Kai-Shek. Journeying through the East China Sea we then focus on some of Japan's smaller islands where a slower pace of life is enjoyed, and our explorations include Ishigaki in the Yaeyama Islands, Okinawa with its subtropical landscapes and fascinating Ryukyu heritage, and Yakushima known for its remarkable cedar forests. Upon reaching Japan's mainland, amongst the many highlights will be one of Japan's most famed gardens, Koraku-en, and our visit to Kyoto including the breathtaking Golden Pavilion. For the natural world enthusiasts, there will be the opportunity to explore the magnificent Takachiho Gorge, walk a section of the ancient pilgrimage routes at Kumano and hopefully enjoy spectacular views of Mount Fuji.

All this will be achieved with great ease sailing aboard the MS Island Sky and enjoying the comfort of our small ship as we travel between these fascinating destinations. We will be joined on board by our expert Guest Speaker and excellent local guides who will provide an insight into the fascinating culture and history along the way.



Guest Speaker – Professor Marie Conte-Helm OBE

Professor Marie Conte-Helm has lectured extensively on the history, arts, and culture of Asia, the Pacific, and the wider world and is an Accredited Lecturer of The Arts Society and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts. She holds higher degrees in the History of Art and in Asian Art from the City University of New York and the East West Center of the University of Hawaii and conducted her postgraduate research on Chinese Landscape Painting at the National Palace Museum in Taipei. Professor Conte-Helm has served as Executive Director of the UK-Japan 21st Century Group and Director General of the Daiwa Anglo-Japanese Foundation, the largest UK charity supporting links between the two countries. She has held academic posts as Reader in Japanese Studies and Director, East Asian Developments at Northumbria University, and as Head of the Japanese Studies Division at the University of Sunderland. Her book publications include *The Japanese and Europe: Economic and Cultural Encounters* and *Japan and the North East of England: From 1862 to the Present Day*. She was awarded an OBE in the 2011 Queen's Birthday Honours for services to UK-Japan educational and cultural relations. In 2019 she was awarded the Order of the Rising Sun, Gold Rays with Rosette by the Government of Japan 'in recognition of her long-time dedication and significant contributions to the promotion of mutual understanding and cultural exchange between Japan and the United Kingdom'.


Koraku-en Gardens

The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Taipei, Taiwan. Fly by scheduled flight.

Day 2 Taipei. Arrive and transfer to our centrally located hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is at leisure.

Day 3 Taipei & Keelung. After breakfast we will delve into the history and heritage of Taiwan and explore how Taipei fuses the past with modernity. We will begin our exploration at the National Palace Museum, which houses over 600,000 priceless treasures of Chinese art, some of which date back almost 5,000 years. Many of the items were removed from the Forbidden Palace before the Communist revolution. From here we will visit the Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, which pays tribute to the former President of Taiwan. After lunch we will transfer to the MS Island Sky moored in Keelung and sail this evening.

Day 4 Ishigaki, Japan. Our first call in Japan will be at the Yaeyama Islands, a cluster of coral reefs and forested mountains. From our base in Ishigaki, we will have a choice of tours to explore the island this morning. Visit Yoneko-yaki Pottery to learn about the craft of making the famous shisa, half dog, half lion statuettes, typically sold in pairs. From here we will drive along the scenic roads to Ishigaki Yaima Village, an open-air museum that has preserved traditional Japanese houses. Located in the forest, keep an eye out for the local wildlife such as squirrel monkeys. There will also be the opportunity to walk through the mangroves along the boardwalk and see the unique flora and fauna. Alternatively, we will visit the Tamatorizaki Cape, where from the observatory there are wonderful views of the Hirakubo Peninsula and the sea of Ishigaki. We will continue to Kabira Park located on Kabira Bay, taking in the stunning views while exploring the shrines and statues that decorate the park. Our final stop will be the Yaesen Brewery, which produces awamori, a sake-like Okinawan spirit. Return to the ship for lunch and sail this afternoon.

Day 5 Motobu, Okinawa. This morning we will sail into Motobu in northern Okinawa. The peninsula that Motobu sits on is shaped by emerald bays, coral reefs, subtropical hills and traditional Ryukyu culture. Here we will explore the natural beauty of the Okinawan Islands with a visit to the Ocean Expo Park which houses wonderful botanical gardens and an arboretum. Within the grounds sits a re-creation of an Okinwan village from the Ryukyu Kingdom. There will also be the opportunity to travel back into Okinawa's fascinating past by admiring the ruins of Nakijin Castle, followed by a walk through the historic district of Bise, renowned for its impressive green tunnels.


Chiang Kai-Shek Memorial Hall, Taipei


Kurashiki


Kyoto


Takachiho Gorge

Day 6 At Sea. Enjoy a day at sea with time to relax on deck and join the lecture programme in the lounge.

Day 7 Kagoshima. Today we arrive into Kagoshima, a major city on the island of Kyushu. The city is often compared to its Italian sister, Naples, due to its mild climate, palm-lined trees and the fact that it sits in the shadow of a rumbling volcano, Sakurajima, Kagoshima's Vesuvius. We will start our day with a ferry ride to Sakurajima and a visit to the visitors' centre telling the history of the volcano. From here we will take a walk with a nature guide learning about the volcanic area. Before leaving we will drive to one of the observation points taking in the views of the lava fields and volcanic peaks. After lunch on board the ship we will explore Kagoshima city with a visit to Sengan-en Garden which was constructed in 1658 by the Shimazu clan, one of the most powerful clans during the Edo period. Within the gardens lies the Iso Residence, whose building dates from 1880s but has been preserved as it was in the 1890s. There is also a museum attached to the garden which details how the Shimazu clan made efforts to industrialise the city. Before returning to the ship there will be some free time to explore a local shopping area.

Day 8 Miyanoura, Yakushima. Spend the morning on the island of Yakushima which became a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1993. Yakushima is famous in botanical circles for many great garden plants, including dwarf plants that have evolved to grow smaller than their mainland cousins. We will spend time here on nature walks, including Yakusugi Land, a nature park populated by a number of the island's ancient cedar trees. Return to the ship for lunch and spend an afternoon at sea as we return to Kyushu island.

Day 9 Hososhima. We sail into Hososhima on the eastern coast of the island of Kyushu today. The area is full of beautiful beaches, rugged coastline and natural beauty. We will have a choice of tours today, including the opportunity to visit the iconic Takachiho Gorge, a volcanic canyon formed over 100,000 years ago, with the Gokase River flowing through it. While there we will walk through the forests on top of the gorge, taking in wonderful views as we cross bridges from one side to another. We will also visit the Takachiho Shrine which was built in 1778. We will have lunch in a local restaurant before driving to the Hyuga Cape, part of a national park recognised for its untamed volcanic coastal formation and unique flora. There will be the chance to walk along the observation trails offering wonderful views of the sea and the coastline. Alternatively, we will offer a morning tour to see the Saitobaru Burial Mounds, which encompass over 300 burial tombs, dating back over 1,700 years. This is one of the few places in Japan where you can see well preserved burial mounds and, as we explore the area, we will learn about the history and the mysteries surrounding them.

Day 10 Matsuyama, Shikoku Island. Today we arrive at the island of Shikoku. From the port of Matsuyama we will visit the old town of Ozu, starting with the Garyu Sanso, a subtle yet outstanding villa. Built in 1907, it is rustic in appearance but traditional in its construction, offering a wonderful insight into traditional Japanese architecture. It took over four years and 9,000 artisans to build the villa and each room has its own features. The villa also has a beautiful garden with its own teahouse. Afterwards we will explore the old town, which grew as a castle town during the Edo period and today retains an atmosphere of a bygone era with stone-paved alleys, houses from the Edo and Meiji periods, as well as merchant and samurai houses. Alternatively, spend the morning on a panoramic drive through the island, taking in the coastal road before crossing a section of the Kurushima Kaikyo Bridge, a suspension bridge crossing the Seto Inland Sea. We will cross to the island of Oshima, and from the Mount Kiro Observatory Park we will see the very impressive bridge as it crosses the sea, connecting islands along the way. After lunch on board there will be the the option to explore Matsuyama on a walking tour which will include the grounds of the city's original castle, one of only twelve surviving original castles in Japan, along with the lovely Ishite-ji Temple as well as seeing the famous Dogo Onsen.

Day 11 Koraku-en & Kurashiki. From the port of Uno-Ko we will visit one of Japan's most famed gardens, Koraku-en, which translates as 'garden of pleasure after'. This 17th century formal garden has 28 acres of walking trails, ponds, plum and cherry trees. After a Japanese lunch in a local restaurant, we will continue to Kurashiki where we explore the old merchant quarter with its fine 17th century wooden warehouses painted white with traditional black tiles, along a canal framed with weeping willows and filled with koi. There will also be the opportunity to visit the Ohara Museum of Art, which includes rare works by Matisse, Picasso and Renoir as well as collections from Japan's Mingei movement including ceramics by Hamada Shoji.

Day 12 Himeji for Kyoto. From our berth in Himeji, we drive inland to Kyoto, Japan's former capital and home to the Emperor for nearly 1,000 years. Our full day tour begins with a visit to Nijo Castle, built in 1603 for the first shogun of the Edo period. After the shogun era ended, it was an imperial palace for a time before being donated to the public. Its palace buildings are some of the best surviving examples of castle palace architecture in Japan. We continue to the Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), which was built as a retirement villa for the shogun and converted into a Buddhist Temple after his death. Built on the edge of a tranquil pond with the second and third storeys covered in gold leaf, we can walk through the peaceful gardens and marvel at the reflection in the still waters. After lunch, we will visit Nanzen-Ji Temple, one of the most important Zen temples in all of Japan. Before returning to the MS Island Sky, there will be some time at leisure allowing for the opportunity to shop for local crafts or pop into one of the many cafes. Alternatively, spend the morning exploring Himeji, home to one of Japan's most iconic castles. Built in the 16th century, Himeji Castle is a World Heritage Site and a national treasure being one of


Motobu Peninsula


Seigantoji Buddhist Temple and Nachi Falls


Matsuyama Castle


Kinkakuji Temple (Golden Pavilion), Kyoto

the few original Feudal era fortresses remaining. The castle's name means "white egret", and the gleaming white walls that soar high above the plains below justify its name. We will see the castle from the outside before visiting the nearby Koko-en Garden. This beautiful Japanese garden, established in 1992, is designed to reflect the Edo period's aesthetic principles. It comprises nine distinct gardens, each with its unique theme and features, such as tranquil ponds, flowing streams, meticulously maintained plantings, and traditional teahouses. As we stroll through Koko-en Garden, we will enjoy the serene atmosphere and picturesque landscapes that provide a stark contrast to the formidable castle.

Day 13 Kumano. We will arrive into Owase on the Kii Peninsula over lunch, known since ancient times as Kumano, a sacred landscape associated with gods and spirits of the departed. For those who would like to stretch their legs, we will walk a section of the Kumano Kodo pilgrimage walk. Starting at Daimonzaka, we will take the ancient stone staircase that is lined with centuries-old trees leading from the valley bottom to the base of the Kumano Nachi Taisha shrine complex. From here we will visit Nachi no Taki Waterfall which at 133 metres is the tallest single-tiered waterfall in Japan. Alternatively, visit Kumano Kodo Centre where we can learn about the history of the pilgrimage routes and sacred sites. Afterwards we will take a scenic drive back to Owase, stopping at the Onigajo rock formations, believed to be the domain of demons due to the fierce formations of the rocks. The impressive cliff stretches around a small cove and is part of the pilgrimage routes. *Please note that the ship will be at anchor this afternoon and we will use the ship's Zodiacs to transfer ashore.*

Day 14 Taganoura for Mount Fuji. Our day will be spent learning more about Mount Fuji, the iconic symbol of Japan. At the Mount Fuji World Heritage Centre, we will see exhibits revealing how the mountain formed and the way humans have interacted with it through the ages before enjoying the views from the observation deck. See the Fujisan Sengen Shrine, originally built over 1,000 years ago to worship the spirits of Mount Fuji and provide spiritual offerings to reduce the number of volcanic eruptions. Later, we visit the Nihondaira Outlook located in a national park with panoramic views of Suruga Bay and Mount Fuji. Take the cable car down the mountain to the Kunozan Toshogu Shrine, dedicated to Tokugawa Ieyasu, who is credited with bringing peace to Japan in the 17th century after a long period of civil war.

Day 15 Yokohama. Disembark this morning in Yokohama from where we will drive to Tokyo for a tour including the Edo Museum. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before checking into our hotel for an overnight stay.

Day 16 Tokyo to London. After breakfast in the hotel we transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. Arrive today.


Kunozan Toshogu Shrine

VIDEO FOOTAGE

For further insight into what to expect from a cruise around Japan aboard the MS Island Sky, please refer to the video section on our website for our new video.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

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

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Magellan	Standard	£11295	£10795
Columbus	Superior	£11795	£11295
Marco Polo	Premium	£12295	£11795
Marco Polo	Corner	£12795	£12295
Erikson	Deluxe Balcony	£13495	£12995
Explorer	Owner's Balcony	£13995	£13495
Explorer	Island	£14495	£13995
Magellan	Standard for sole use	£13995	£13495
Columbus	Superior for sole use	£14295	£13795

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Overnight hotel accommodation in Taipei & Tokyo with breakfast • Lunch on days 3 & 15 • 12 nights aboard the MS Island Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch & dinner • Noble Caledonia onboard team including Guest Speaker • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.
Not Included: Travel insurance, dinner on days 2 & 15.

MS ISLAND SKY




The Library


Deluxe Balcony Suite


The Restaurant

The much loved MS Island Sky is one of our two flagships and sister vessel to the MS Hebridean 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 Island 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 seating area and some have private balconies, whilst those on the Marco Polo Deck feature tinted, sliding glass doors allowing greatly enhanced viewing opportunities and quick access to the deck. 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 each suite affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring marble-topped vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, a large wardrobe, dressing table and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, television and a telephone in each suite. Refillable water bottles, dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a safe, hairdryer, assorted Noble Isle toiletries, air-conditioning and heating. The comfortable beds in each suite can be configured as either double or twin.

Your Dining

With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the cuisine on board the MS Island 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 the Club. Tea and coffee are also available 24 hours a day. Special diets can be catered for with sufficient notice.


Standard Suite


The Lounge


Alfresco Dining on the Lido Deck

Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large Lounge on the Columbus 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 Marco Polo 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 Columbus 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 as well as 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 Magellan Deck, and outside there is a rear Lido Deck located on the Erikson Deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. Further to this on the top Explorer Deck there is an observation area ideal for spotting wildlife, complete with sun loungers for sunbathing, relaxing with a book or catching up with fellow travellers. The Promenade Deck wraps around the whole ship giving outstanding views. There is also a small beauty salon on board with appointments made on request.

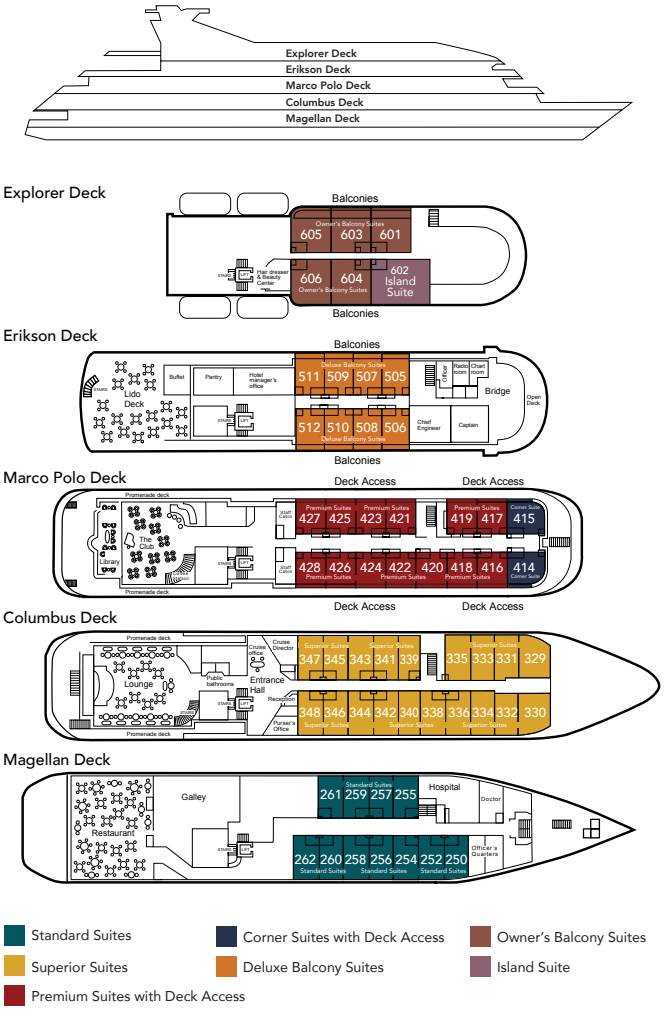
Your Comfort

The MS Island 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 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 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 ISLAND SKY DECK PLAN


Explorer Deck
Erikson Deck
Marco Polo Deck
Columbus Deck
Magellan Deck
Explorer Deck
Balconies
605 603 601
606 604 602 Island Suite
Balconies
Erikson Deck
Balconies
511 509 507 505
512 510 508 506
Lido Deck
Bridge
Balconies
Marco Polo Deck
Deck Access
Deck Access
427 425 423 421 419 417 415
428 426 424 422 420 418 416 414
Deck Access
Deck Access
Columbus Deck
347 345 343 341 339 335 333 331 329
348 346 344 342 340 338 336 334 332 330
Entrance Hall
Lounge
Magellan Deck
Galley
Restaurant
261 259 257 255
262 260 258 256 254 252 250
Hospital
Standard Suites
Standard Suites
Standard Suites