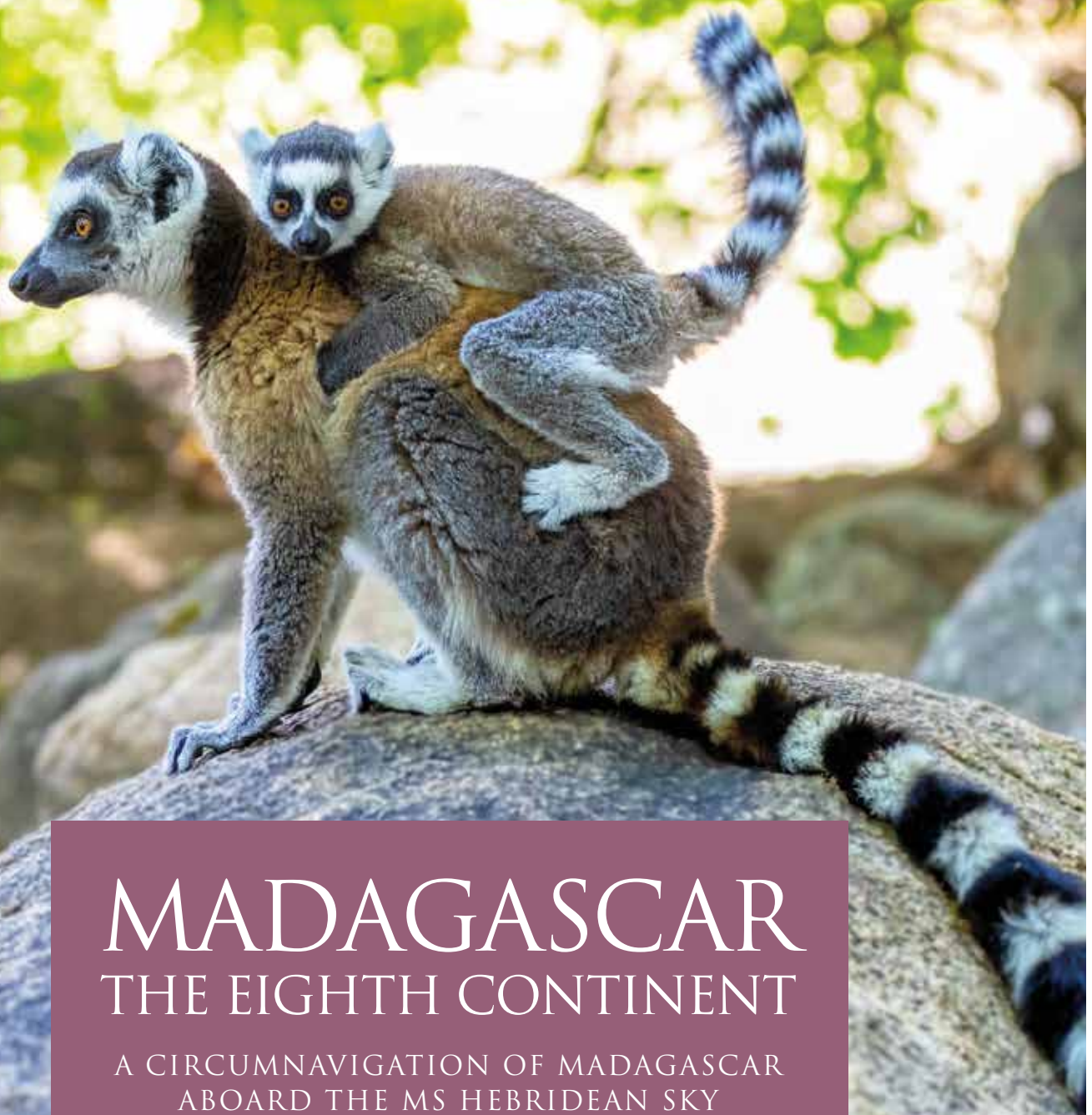


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# MADAGASCAR

## THE EIGHTH CONTINENT

A CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF MADAGASCAR  
ABOARD THE MS HEBRIDEAN SKY

2<sup>ND</sup> TO 21<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2024 &  
19<sup>TH</sup> DECEMBER 2024 TO 7<sup>TH</sup> JANUARY 2025





Black and white ruffed lemur



Nosy Hara

Join us aboard the MS Hebridean Sky for a full circumnavigation of the fascinating island of Madagascar. The animals, plants, landscapes and people that make up this thousand mile long island are unlike anywhere else in the world and we have the luxury of two weeks of exploration to experience the many wonders of the island. During our comprehensive itinerary there will be ample opportunity to discover the rainforests which are full of wildlife including the iconic lemur, chameleons and indigenous birdlife as well as seeing the underwater world and village life.

Madagascar has long remained obscure as a destination and is still relatively undiscovered, there is minimal infrastructure in many parts of the island and for those wishing to explore in some depth, doing so by small ship, especially one as well-suited as the MS Hebridean Sky is far preferable to visiting by any other means. In the company of just 100 fellow guests our days will be spent exploring ashore, often traversing over rugged terrain and walking through spectacular rainforests, and each evening we will have the benefit of returning to our comfortable ship to relax and look forward to the next adventure.

With the vessel's fleet of Zodiacs for forays ashore, allowing access to the wonderful places denied to larger ships, we will explore and enjoy encounters with fabulous endemic wildlife in this immensely rich and timeless corner of the Indian Ocean. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by our expert crew and officers who, along with our expedition team including marine biologists, ornithologists and botanists have many years of experience in the region.



## 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 is an extract from a ship's log from a previous expedition which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

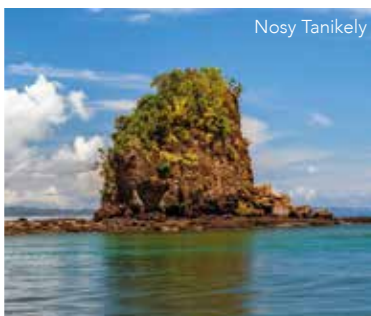
**Nosy Mangabe:** This morning we were anchored off the Masoala Peninsula which is covered in primary rainforest. Our destination Nosy Mangabe is a small island in the national park. We disembarked the long and 'Birder' walks first followed by the medium and short walks on a beautiful golden beach backed by primary rainforest. Once ashore we split into our various groups and headed off into the forest in search of wildlife. The lemurs appeared, racing through the treetops and there were frogs everywhere. There were the green-backed mantellas, quite brash in their black and green colours, tiny nondescript frogs laying their single egg in the stumps of bamboo. There were a number of leaf-tailed geckos which were so well camouflaged that they were almost impossible to see even at close range. Near the landing site, the lemurs came down to check us out and allowed for some great close up photographs. On walks inland we saw some huge boulders of 3.2 billion year old granodiorite that formed akin to how tors formed in the UK. This afternoon we had the opportunity to land at the camp for a second time and embark on an afternoon exploratory walk or enjoy a long Zodiac cruise along the peninsula. Both options were rewarded with excellent wildlife sightings. 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.

## Guest Speaker – Daniel Austin



You will be joined by an excellent expedition team on board along with Guest Speaker, Daniel Austin. Daniel is a travel writer, naturalist, photographer and tour lecturer who specialises in Madagascar. He visits Madagascar every year to explore and photograph its diverse wonders. His fascination with this enigmatic country extends not only to its unique flora and fauna, but also to its people, culture, history, geology and beyond. Daniel has written three books about Madagascar and contributed words and images to countless others. He also presents occasional lectures on the country, including at the prestigious Royal Geographical Society, as well as on specialist tours of the island. His expertise is frequently consulted by filmmakers making documentaries about Madagascar. In addition, Daniel is Secretary of the Anglo-Malagasy Society, a UK-based organisation founded in 1961, which holds events and meetings in London to promote knowledge of

Madagascar amongst British people and to foster relations between the two countries. Daniel is the founder of the Madagascar Library, a private collection of some 3,000 books, maps and other documents about the country, available for use by academics, journalists, historians and other researchers. He studied linguistics and cognitive science at the University of Cambridge and at UCL in London, as well as engineering science at the University of Oxford.



## The Itinerary

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

**Day 2 Mauritius.** Arrive today and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky moored in Port Louis. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

**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. Fields of sugar cane and plantations of tropical fruits, vanilla and all manner of spices perfume the air. We will enjoy views from the Nez de Boeuf and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant we will visit the 'Cite 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. Continue to Salazie, a verdant landscape and home to many waterfalls including the 'Voile de la Mariee' before spending some free time in St Denis on the way back to the ship. This afternoon is at leisure before we set sail this evening.

**Day 4 At Sea.** Spend the day at sea as we sail towards Madagascar. Maybe join a lecture or find a spot on deck to relax.

**Days 5 & 6 Taolagnaro, Madagascar.** Our first call in Madagascar is the southeastern port of Taolagnaro, also known as Fort Dauphin. This was the first French settlement in Madagascar, situated on a peninsula overlooked by the Anosy mountains. We will moor overnight and our time here will include an excursion to Nahampoana Private Park. The reserve is only 67 hectares but home to four species of lemur including ring-tailed and sifakas whilst the gardens showcase Madagascan plants with three-cornered palms and spiny Desiderata trees. A tour of Taolagnaro will include the market and historical buildings where we will learn about the arrival of the Magalasy people to Madagascar and the links with Reunion. Also enjoy walks in the Domaine de la Cascade, a 136 hectare park consisting of a nursery set in a paradisiacal valley with several walking trails and a beautiful waterfall.

**Day 7 Tulear.** Having sailed around the southern tip of Madagascar we arrive in Tulear at lunchtime. This afternoon you may like to join the tour to the Antsokay Arboretum which is entirely devoted to the conservation of the plants from the south west of Madagascar and, after more than 30 years of hard work, offers a densely kept selection of flora presenting a typical sub-arid thicket with baobab trees towering over the smaller plants. We will see the four hectare botanical garden which comprises over 900 species of plants of which 90% are endemic to the region. Alternatively visit the Reniala Private Reserve, a small area of just 60 hectares but containing a spiny forest which is unique to southern Madagascar. The park is home to 200 plant species

including baobabs as well as being a haven for birders with sightings of paradise flycatchers, Madagascar hoopoe and Madagascar crested drongo.

**Day 8 Andavadoaka & Nosy Hao.** The vessel will anchor this morning off the small fishing community of Andavadoaka, home to the Vezo fishing people. The area offers the most diverse marine ecosystem on the southwest coast. It is also the base for Blue Ventures, a marine conservation society that has helped the local villagers invest in their community by way of training local guides and showing ways to preserve their resources. We hope to learn more about the local projects before sailing over lunch to Nosy Hao to discover the sandy white beaches where we can enjoy a swim in the warm waters.

**Day 9 Morondava.** From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, we will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach. From here there will be a choice of excursions to explore the local region. A half day morning tour will visit the Avenue des Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the world, six are endemic to Madagascar and here we will see the *Adansonia grandidieri* species with a row of 20 to 25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before continuing to the Zazamalala Foundation which is dedicated to nature protection. We will learn about their work in teaching the local community about reforestation and protecting local wildlife from poaching and also visit the botanical gardens. Later, we return to Morondava and explore the local market. Alternatively, join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest. Situated approximately a two hour drive from Morondava, we will pass the Avenue des Baobabs as we travel north. Kirindy is a 10,000 hectare, dry deciduous forest, one of the most endangered in the world where the flora and fauna includes many endemic species. Here we find three species of baobab, many birds and reptiles including snakes, tortoises and lizards. Eight species of lemur reside here including the pale form marked lemur (please note that access to Kirindy is dependent on the road conditions at the time of our visit).

**Day 10 At Sea.** Spend a leisurely day on board as we continue our journey around the Madagascan Coast.

**Day 11 Mahajanga.** Mahajanga is a major port in northwest Madagascar situated on the Betsiboka River and is our base for a full day tour of the surrounding area. We will begin with a visit to a local school and enjoy a performance by the students before we make our way to Lake Mangatsa. Here we learn the stories of the lake from our local guides and why it is sacred to many locals. As we explore the area we will be on the look out for the resident wildlife. Lunch will be served at the Antsanitia Resort and there will be the opportunity to swim or enjoy a walk along the beach, see the local fishing boats and visit the village before we return to the MS Hebridean Sky.

**Day 12 Nosy Tanikely.** We arrive mid-morning at the Nosy Tanikely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island which offers snorkelling opportunities



Avenue des Baobabs



Sifakas

Masoala National Park



and wonderful beaches. We will take the chance to either swim in the clear waters or snorkel over the corals keeping an eye out for reef fish, turtles and morays. Alternatively our naturalists will lead guided walks on the island where we may see the resident lemurs, fruit bats and hermit crabs and enjoy fantastic views from the lighthouse on the island's highest point.

**Day 13 Nosy Hara.** As we continue our journey along the western coast of Madagascar we will find a number of strangely shaped limestone islets that dot the aquamarine-coloured sea. The expedition team will decide on the most suitable island for landing, such as Nosy Hara with its abundant birdlife and great places to swim off the beach. We will spend the day exploring the islands on foot or alternatively join a Zodiac cruise around the islands and a chance to snorkel over the coral.

**Day 14 Diego Suarez.** This morning we will enter dramatic Diego Suarez, a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. This morning choose from a city tour visiting the Commonwealth Cemetery and Place Joffre, or a visit to the Malagasy rainforest at the Mount Amber National Park. Dividing into short and long walk parties we will go in search of lemurs and chameleons as we explore the rainforest. In the towering vegetation, we may spot several species of lemurs and chameleons as well as endemic birds, including parrots. Return to the ship for lunch and an afternoon cruising.

**Days 15 & 16 Nosy Mangabe & Masoala National Park.** We will spend a day and a half exploring from our anchorage in Antongil Bay. We discover Nosy Mangabe, a 520-hectare island reserve and one of the most diverse areas of virgin rainforest 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 organise a series of nature walks looking at the varied trees, plants 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 will 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 whilst there will also be the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

**Day 17 Taomasina.** Our final call in Madagascar is Taomasina, the country's main port and second largest city. Today we will visit the Ivoloina 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.

**Day 18 At Sea.** Enjoy the day at sea to relax and reflect on our Madagascan adventure as we sail back to Mauritius.

**Day 19 Mauritius to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

**Day 20 London.** Arrive this morning.



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Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
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Mawson	Premium	£12395	£11895
Mawson	Corner	£12895	£12395
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£13895	£13395
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£14295	£13795
Shackleton	Hebridean	£15295	£14795
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	SOLD OUT	SOLD OUT
Byrd	Superior for sole use	SOLD OUT	SOLD OUT

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 17 nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • 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.

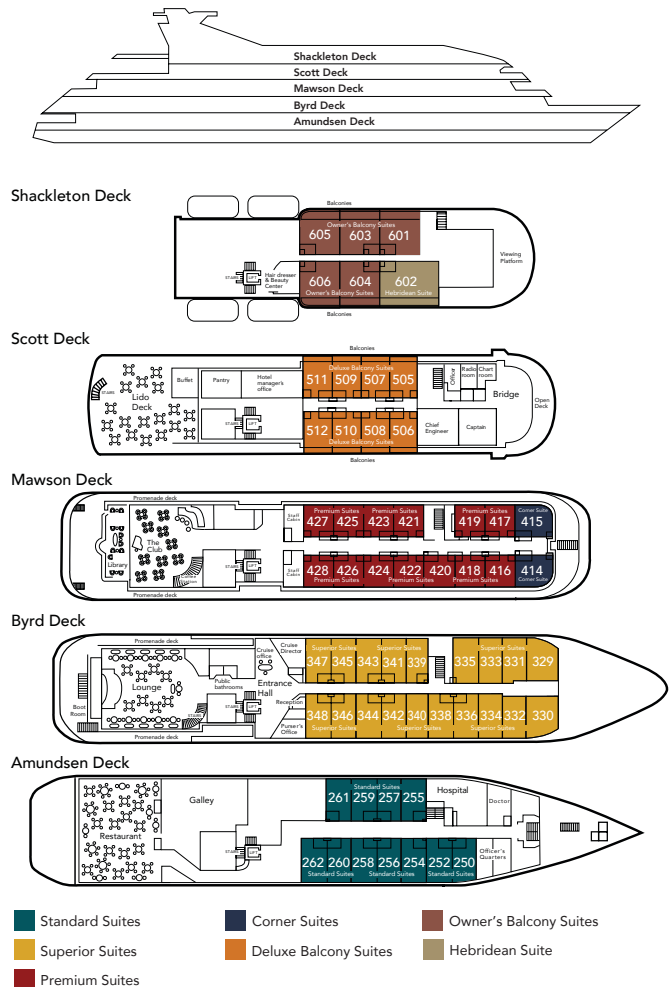
## Your Comfort

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



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.



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.



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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: Ring-tailed lemur with baby.