

# ON TERRA FIRMA

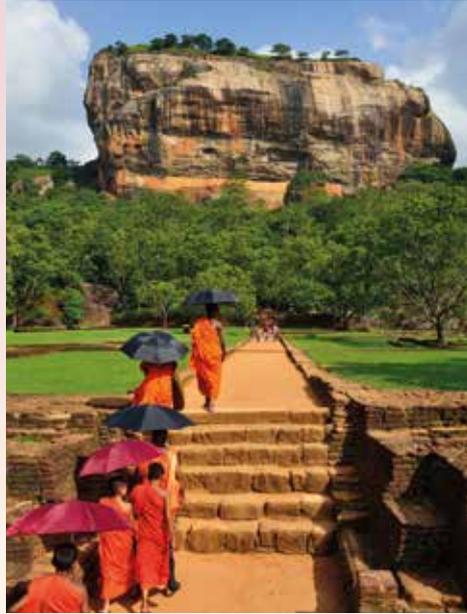
A COLLECTION OF ESCORTED TOURS  
WITH NOBLE CALEDONIA

2020 & 2021



NOBLE CALEDONIA





# ON TERRA FIRMA

A PASSPORT TO DISCOVERY FOR THE GENUINE TRAVELLER WITH NOBLE CALEDONIA

We very much hope you will enjoy browsing through the pages of our latest brochure. The creation and planning of all our tours is always a rewarding experience and over the following pages we detail the many escorted tours we have devised to appeal to those looking for something a little different from the usual collection of tours offered in more mainstream brochures. Our escorted land tours, some more arduous than others, often combine two or more hotels and seek to provide the traveller with a greater understanding of the area, offering an enriching, memorable and as comfortable a journey as possible.

Our varied array of escorted tours are designed with the discerning traveller in mind with an appreciation of history, culture and the natural world. From the treasures of Armenia, Istanbul and Georgia to the wonderful gardens of Kerry, Madeira and Galicia or the scenic beauty of Lake Constance and Slovenia, to name just a few, we believe we have a captivating choice of tours and destinations, wherever your interest lies. The world of travel is indeed a crowded one and we appreciate how much choice you have for your next tour. We therefore try to steer away from the typical package tour itinerary and instead plan our tours around what we know our discerning travellers enjoy. Guided excursions are included in each destination which will provide an insight into the cultures, customs and natural wonders of the region.

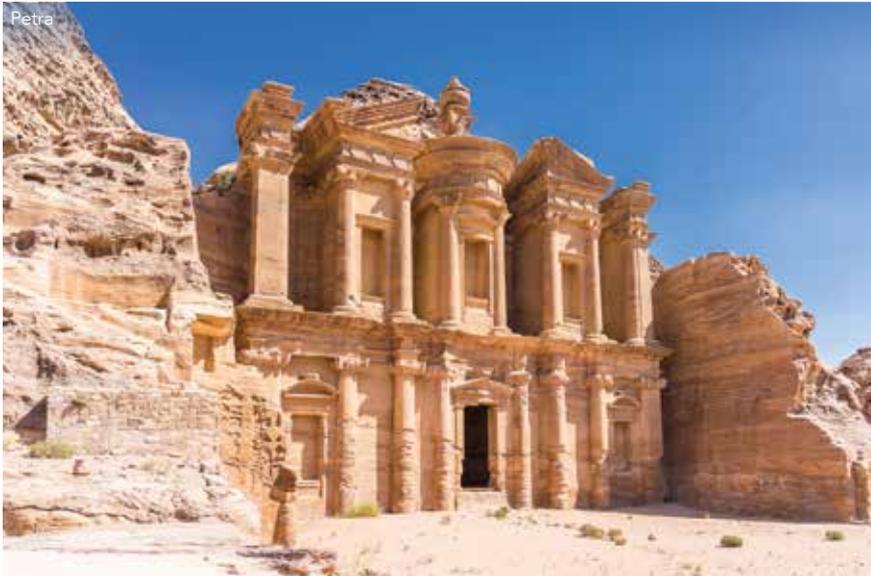
An important element of all of our escorted tours is the Tour Manager and our expert leaders will not only look after you from beginning to end, but will also provide the knowledge and expertise required for these very individual tours, thus ensuring you enjoy the very best that each individual country has to offer.

Whether you are a past traveller with us or new to Noble Caledonia, we hope that we will see you soon on one of our escorted tours, joining us as we explore with a sense of discovery, wonder and expectation. This is only one of many brochures we issue throughout the year. Therefore if you are unable to find something of interest in this brochure, please contact us or refer to our website for some more inspiration in planning your next trip.

## NOBLE CALEDONIA CHARITABLE TRUST



During our worldwide explorations over the years, we have come across many situations where help is desperately needed, be it following a natural disaster, civil unrest, abject poverty or to save an endangered species. To this end we established the Noble Caledonia Charitable Trust in 2013 (NCCT). It is our vision to use the Noble Caledonia framework to improve economic, social and environmental conditions in the areas we work and visit. Our Tour Managers are uniquely positioned to identify projects and lead fundraising initiatives, whilst many of our guests genuinely care about the people and places we visit and want to make a difference. 100% of all donations go directly to the beneficiaries as Noble Caledonia Ltd covers all the administration costs and donates a percentage of profits annually. Details of our projects can be found on our website [www.noble-caledonia.co.uk](http://www.noble-caledonia.co.uk)



## ESCORTED TOURS BY PRIVATE TRAIN & JET

In addition to the many escorted, land based tours detailed over the following pages, we also have a wide selection of tours by private train as well as an exclusive journey by private jet. Please contact us or refer to our website for further information.

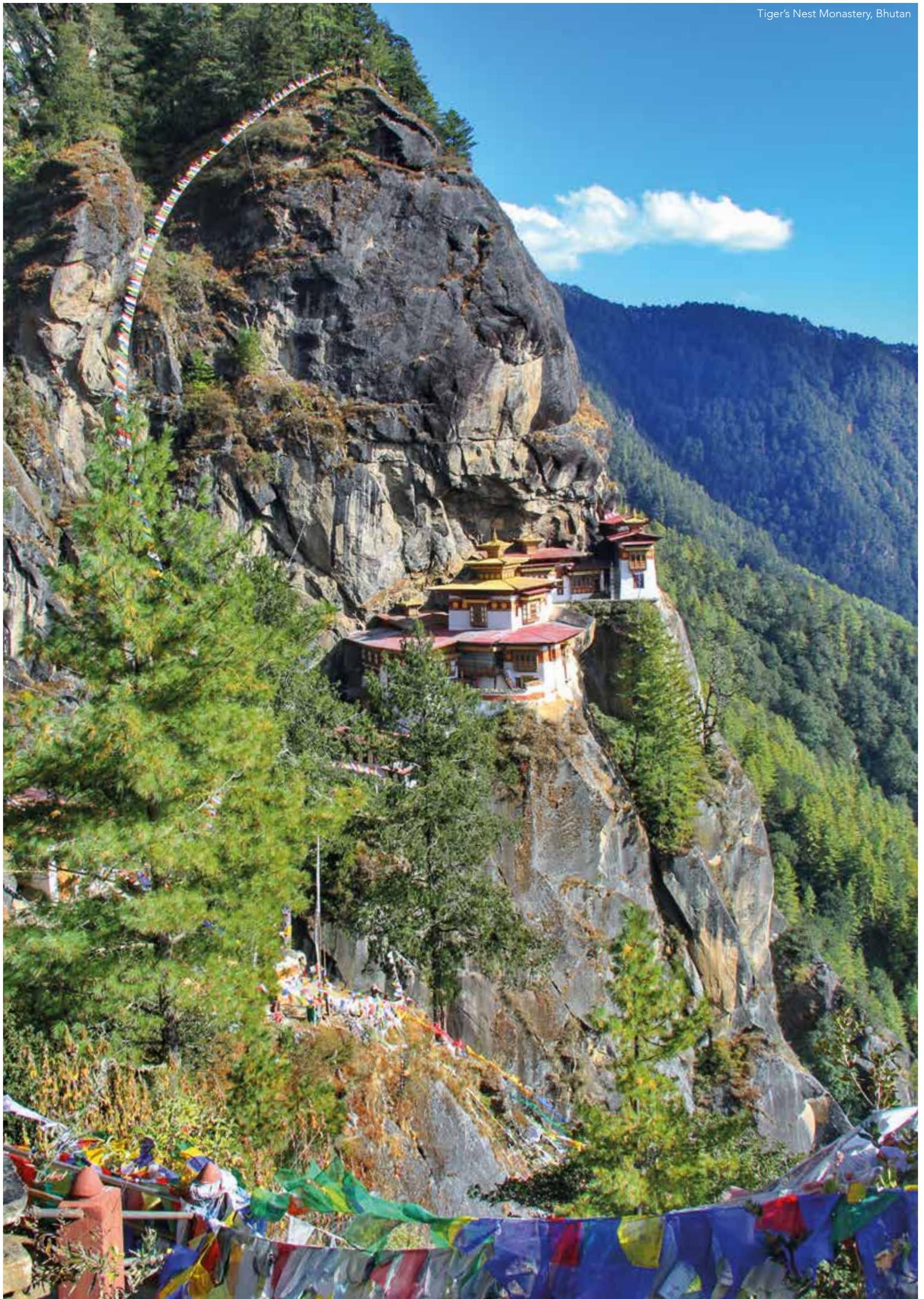
### JOURNEYS BY PRIVATE TRAIN

To travel by private train is to experience traditional train travel from a bygone era but with modern comforts for the everyday traveller. The tours we feature by private train offer access to some of the most remote places and the itineraries are designed to take in some of the most exotic and culturally diverse destinations the world has to offer. After an informative and enjoyable day exploring you will return to the sanctuary of your hotel on wheels to be greeted by your cabin attendants. Join us on board and travel the Trans-Siberian route, the Silk Road, across India, through South Africa or the beautiful landscapes of Namibia. The private trains offer exceptional comfort with modern facilities and air-conditioned cars. The tours are specifically designed for adventure travellers, providing them with a unique view of local cultures and customs, whilst travelling in the comfort and safety of a private 'hotel on wheels'.

### CROSSROADS OF CULTURES BY PRIVATE JET

We are delighted to have chartered a private plane to offer a remarkable itinerary which will enable us to travel in the utmost comfort between some of the most fascinating countries in Asia. Our three week journey includes Jordan's magnificent rose-red city of Petra, Oman's ancient capital of Nizwa, the peaceful backwaters of Kerala, Nepal's evocative capital of Kathmandu, the remote mountain Kingdom of Bhutan, the Silk Road city of Samarkand and finally Georgia's charming capital city of Tbilisi. In addition to our Guest Speaker, Ernest Rea and our excellent local guides, we have arranged for local specialists to give talks in some destinations which will add greatly to our knowledge and understanding of the history and culture of the region. Our in-depth itinerary certainly isn't one which could be undertaken independently with such ease by using scheduled flights. We have carefully selected a range of wonderful hotels which are all five-star or best available.







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1<sup>st</sup> June 2020 & 7<sup>th</sup> June 2021



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4<sup>th</sup> September 2020 & 21<sup>st</sup> May 2021



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Seven nights staying at the charming Villa il Poggiale

6<sup>th</sup> October 2020; 11<sup>th</sup> May & 5<sup>th</sup> October 2021

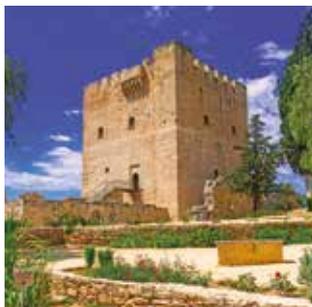


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25<sup>th</sup> October 2020



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2<sup>nd</sup> November 2020  
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8<sup>th</sup> November 2020,  
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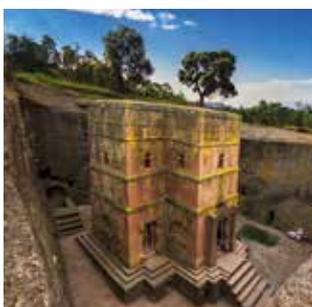


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11<sup>th</sup> May & 17<sup>th</sup> September 2021



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13<sup>th</sup> May & 9<sup>th</sup> September 2021



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A seven night exploration of the Veneto

29<sup>th</sup> May 2021 & 18<sup>th</sup> September

#### PLEASE NOTE:

To best enjoy some of our escorted tours, you should be in good physical condition and able to walk considerable distances. Some tours will involve being on your feet for long periods and/or extended periods of walking including steps over uneven terrain whilst many sites of historical interest are reached by steps without handrails. A selection of our escorted tours include accommodation at a number of different hotels with relatively long distances travelled in between. If you have any queries or concerns pertaining to the level of mobility required for any of our escorted tours, please do not hesitate to contact one of our experienced Travel Consultants.

# OPERA & GARDENS IN THE KINGDOM OF KERRY

A six night escorted visit to the beautiful Parknasilla Resort with performances by London Festival Opera

1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> June 2020 & 7<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2021



Bantry House overlooking Bantry Bay

## LONDON FESTIVAL OPERA

For our stay in Kerry we are delighted that we will be joined by members of London Festival Opera who will perform both at the hotel and in some wonderful locations such as Bantry House in Ireland. Bringing together artists from the major Opera companies including the Royal Opera House, London Festival Opera have achieved a considerable reputation for presenting opera in some of the world's leading venues.



Due to the popularity of this tour and the exceptional feedback we receive each year, we are once again returning to the beautiful Parknasilla Resort on the 'Ring of Kerry' for a week of marvellous scenery, splendid gardens and uplifting music. All the best ingredients are here; magical scenery, gardens at their early summer best, opera performances in stunning settings and warm Irish hospitality in one of Ireland's most renowned hotels.

Together with our good friends at London Festival Opera we can offer seven days of absolute bliss. There will be time to relax and enjoy the hotel's excellent facilities as well as guided trips to some of Kerry's and West Cork's famous gardens. We will explore the 'Ring of Kerry' and drive over the mountains to Bantry House and Gardens. Here, after a guided tour of the gardens, we will enjoy a performance by London Festival Opera in the grand setting of Bantry House. Other highlights will include a visit to Garnish Island in West Cork, a spectacular garden of almost sub-tropical splendour and Muckross House by the Lakes of Killarney. In the main the tours will be limited to half days in order that you may enjoy the Parknasilla Resort and its breathtaking beautiful position.



Muckross House and Gardens



Innacullen Gardens, Garnish Island

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Cork, Ireland.** Fly by scheduled flight. Drive to the Parknasilla Resort. Welcome drinks and dinner this evening. (D)

**Day 2 Derreen Gardens & Beara Peninsula.** After breakfast depart on a morning drive to Derreen Gardens. Designed and planted by the fifth Marquis of Lansdowne in the 1870s, it is now owned and managed by his great-grandson, David Bigham, and his wife Anthea. Derreen is famous for its tree ferns as well as azaleas and rhododendrons. Enjoy the magnificent views across Kilmackilloge Harbour to the Caha Mountains before we return to the hotel for a few hours of relaxation. In the late afternoon there will be a performance by London Festival Opera followed by afternoon tea. (B, D)

**Day 3 Derrynane House & Kenmare.** This morning visit Derrynane House, the ancestral home of Daniel O’Connell. The house is a museum commemorating one of Ireland’s leading historical figures. In the afternoon a bus transfer will be provided to the local town of Kenmare for time to explore and shop at leisure. (B, D)

**Day 4 Lakes of Killarney & Muckross House.** Morning excursion to the Killarney National Park and the house and gardens of Muckross House. Tour the gardens and house which was once owned by the Herbert family who entertained Queen Victoria here in 1861. The setting by the lake shore with its mountain backdrop is stunning. In the late afternoon London Festival Opera will perform for us followed by afternoon tea. (B, D)

**Day 5 Parknasilla Resort.** It would be unforgivable to come to such a place as this and not have a complete day to enjoy the hotel and its extensive grounds. For the energetic there will be a choice of a guided short or long walk through the grounds and along the coast. Otherwise, relax with a good book in one of the many vantage points scattered throughout the grounds. (B, D)

**Day 6 Garnish Island & Bantry House.** Drive over the mountains to Bantry Bay on a full day excursion that will include a morning visit to Garnish Island and the beautiful Innacullin Gardens. These remarkable gardens owe their existence to the creative partnership, some seventy years ago of Anna Bryce, then owner of the island and Harold Peto, architect and garden designer. The sheltered position and Gulf Stream is favourable to the growth of ornamental plants, many normally only found in sub-tropical or Mediterranean climates. Continue to Bantry House, overlooking Bantry Bay. We will explore the house, one of the finest historic houses in Ireland along with the gardens. After a light lunch, London Festival Opera will perform their farewell concert in one of the grand rooms. Return to the Parknasilla Resort later this afternoon. (B, D)

**Day 7 Cork to London.** Transfer to the airport for your return scheduled flight to London. (B)



Cottages in Kenmare



Bantry Bay House



Beara Peninsula

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	2020	2021
West Wing Standard Double/Twin	£2095	£2295
West Wing Superior Double/Twin	£2195	£2395
Main House Manor Sea View Double/Twin	£2395	£2595
Main House Superior Manor Sea View Double/Twin	£2495	£2695
Main House Manor Suite	£2695	£2895
West Wing Balcony Suite	£2795	£2995
West Wing Parknasilla Suite with Balcony	£2795	£2995
Main House Princess Grace Suite	£2995	£3195
West Wing Standard Single	£2495	£2695
West Wing Small Parknasilla Superior Single	£2695	£2895

**Group Size:** During the excursions for this escorted tour we restrict group size per guide to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Six nights at the Parknasilla Resort • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine with dinner • Two afternoon teas at Parknasilla Resort • Guided excursions • Performances by London Festival Opera • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# YOUR HOTEL – PARKNASILLA RESORT

The hotel and gardens



For generations this very special place has captured the imagination of many including such literary luminaries as George Bernard Shaw. Pictures can only do limited justice to its location where water, islands and mountains create something spellbinding. Being the West Coast of Ireland, we cannot promise you long sunny days for your entire stay. In fact you are likely to experience the full spectrum of weather in one day, but it is this maritime climate and warming Atlantic influences that create the almost sub-tropical landscape. Situated in 500 acres, Parknasilla Resort is situated in the middle of some of Kerry's finest scenery. Here you will find interesting walks and tiny sandy coves for those who wish to swim in the sea.

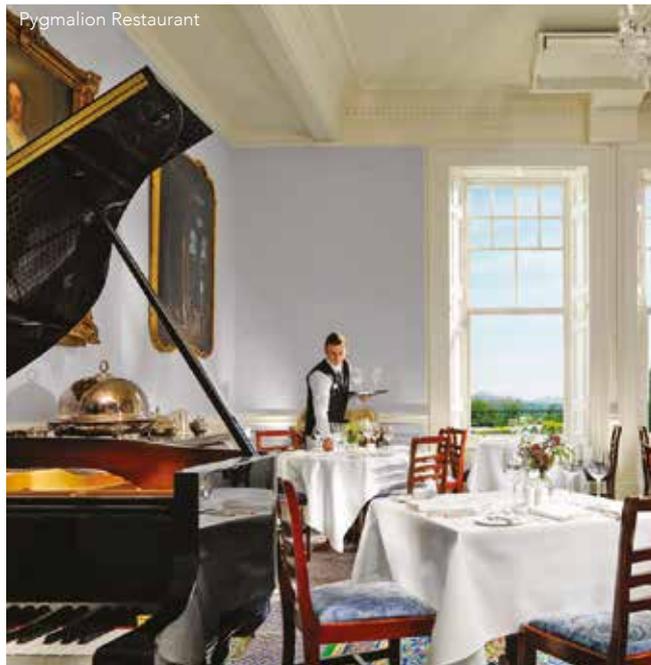
## Your Space

Once a grand house, Parknasilla has grown gracefully into her life as a hotel. The ground floor of the original main house is where you will find a number of delightful sitting rooms, all offering wonderful views. Here also is the Pygmalion dining room where gourmet food is provided using many locally sourced fine meats and fish. The health spa with a magnificent swimming pool and the views from the pool across the sea have to be seen to be believed. Ultimately, what makes a great hotel is its staff. Here, you will find some of the best in the world all dedicated to making your stay in Kerry a most memorable and joyful experience.

## Your Dining

Our stay at Parknasilla Resort & Spa includes breakfast and dinner daily in addition to two afternoon teas. The delightful Pygmalion Restaurant is decorated in an elegant Victorian style with high ceilings, impressive paintings and chandeliers and the bay windows provide a majestic view over Kenmare Bay. Begin your day with an Irish breakfast or continental style options. The dinner menu boasts imaginative cuisine highlighting the best of modern Irish cooking. Afternoon tea is served in the Doolittle Bar which has a casual atmosphere and offers Irish beers and stouts.

Pygmalion Restaurant



Doolittle Bar



Indoor Pool



Princess Grace Living Room - Main House



Manor Suite - Main House



Balcony Suite - West Wing



Superior Double with Sea View - West Wing

## Your Accommodation

All rooms offer crisp white sheets and duvet, en-suite bathroom, hairdryer, selection of soft fluffy towels, bathrobe and slippers, luxury bath products, multi-channel TV, tea & coffee making facilities, mineral water, direct dial telephones and Wi-Fi. *Please note that hotel rooms in the West Wing are only accessible by stairway.*

**Standard Double/Twin – West Wing.** Rooms are decorated in soft colours with a view of the Kerry Mountains and feature a large double bed, spacious seating area, writing desk and en-suite with bath and shower.

**Superior Double/Twin – West Wing.** Spacious and bright, these rooms have recently been refurbished. Some enjoy the lovely sea view which is synonymous with Parknasilla and others look on to the majestic Kerry Mountains. All have king beds, a relaxing reading area and stunning new bathrooms with bath/shower or shower only.

**Manor Sea View – Main House.** Rooms are designed in keeping with the period when Parknasilla was built with restored mahogany and walnut furniture. With breathtaking views of the Kenmare Bay, Parknasilla's lush grounds and the Kerry Mountains beyond, each room has their own character and style. These rooms feature a king size bed and en-suite with shower only.

**Superior Manor Sea View – Main House.** Rooms are beautifully spacious and open plan in design with a large sleeping area and relaxation space with awe inspiring views of Kenmare Bay and the Kerry Mountains. These rooms feature a Queen size bed and en-suite with shower only.

**Manor Suite – Main House.** This suite exudes the air of understated elegance of a bygone era. Individually designed with breathtaking views of the Kenmare Bay, Parknasilla's lush grounds and the Kerry Mountains beyond. Bathrooms with stucco lustro painted walls and elegant Thomas Crapper and Co Victorian/Edwardian fittings. Rooms feature a king size bed with bath and shower.

**Balcony Suite – West Wing.** Indulge your taste for contemporary luxury in the Balcony Suite with a large bedroom and separate sitting room. The Balcony Suite contains floor to ceiling windows leading on to a large balcony to ensure that the serene views of Kenmare Bay or the Kerry Mountains are truly memorable. Rooms feature a king size bed with bath and shower.

**Parknasilla Suite with Balcony – West Wing.** Situated in the newest part of the West Wing, the Parknasilla Suite with Balcony rooms are open plan with soft couches and lavish furnishings. They feature floor to ceiling windows leading on to a large balcony to ensure that the stunning views of Kenmare Bay or the Kerry Mountains are truly memorable.

**Princess Grace Suite – Main House.** Parknasilla's most famous suite is the Princess Grace Suite and is made up of a large living area, double bedroom, spacious bathroom and separate toilet. The wonderful sea views and large wrap around balcony make the suite extra special. This suite features a king size bed with bath and shower.

## Single Rooms – West Wing

**Small Parknasilla Superior Single.** These rooms are designed in a contemporary style and located in the newest part of the West Wing with a double bed and en-suite bathroom with shower.

**Standard Single – West Wing.** These rooms are smaller than the Superior Singles and offer a double bed with en-suite bathroom with bath and shower.

# THE HIDDEN BALTICS & BELARUS

An escorted tour of Latvia, Lithuania & Belarus

4<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> September 2020 & 21<sup>st</sup> to 30<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Having operated voyages around the Baltic for over twenty years, we thought it was time to devise an escorted tour which allows for some more time to discover the many facets of both Latvia and Lithuania with the added benefit of time to explore the little visited yet intriguing city of Minsk in Belarus. This in-depth journey which constantly delights our guests offers the perfect balance of guided excursions with visits to some stunning National Parks, glorious palaces and gardens, natural wonders such as the Curonian Spit, fascinating museums showcasing remnants of the Soviet era as well as time spent wandering the charming streets of Riga and Vilnius admiring the Gothic architecture.

Despite the often turbulent history of conquests and partitions, since the departure of their Soviet masters, both Latvia and Lithuania have retained their unique character and enchanting old quarters. This, combined with their natural treasures has meant they are fast being recognised as two of Europe's gems and now is the time to discover their many riches. In contrast, the city of Minsk was razed to the ground in World War II and very little remains from the pre-war years, there are however a myriad of places of interest to those interested in the Soviet period and just outside the city is Nesvizh Castle, a combination of Medieval, Renaissance and Classical architecture which we will explore during our time in Belarus.

We do hope you can join us for what promises to be a fascinating tour of some relatively unknown places of much interest which are unlikely to remain 'hidden' for too much longer given their wealth of cultural and natural wonders.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Riga, Latvia.** Fly by scheduled flight from London to Riga and transfer to the centrally located Grand Poet Hotel for a two night stay. Explore Riga at leisure this afternoon before meeting for dinner at a local restaurant. (D)

**Day 2 Riga.** Riga, the 800-year-old capital of Latvia is famous for its historic centre and Art Nouveau architecture. On a morning city tour we begin with a panoramic drive along the boulevards of the city, passing by the iconic Freedom Monument. We will take a walking tour of the Old Town, visiting Dome Square to view the exterior of the Dome Cathedral and to see the House of Blackheads; now the temporary residence of the President of Latvia. This house with its 14th century origins was destroyed in 1948 and restored in 1999. Pass through Theatre Square to view the Riga Russian Theatre and the Great and Small Guilds which reflect Latvia's period as a Hanseatic City. Continue to the Swedish Gates, constructed during Riga's period under Swedish rule in the 17th century before viewing other interesting buildings such as the Parliament and the 'Three Brothers', the oldest complex of dwelling houses in the city. Our tour ends with a walk down Albert Street admiring the interesting Art Nouveau architecture. Enjoy an afternoon and evening at leisure. (B)

**Day 3 Rundale Palace & Klaipeda, Lithuania.** After a leisurely breakfast transfer to the Zemgale region of Latvia and the beautiful Rundale Palace. Constructed in the 1730s to a design by Bartolomeo Rastrelli, Rundale Palace was originally the summer residence of Ernst Johann von Biron, Duke of Courland. The 136 room palace was badly damaged in 1919 during the Latvian War of Independence but has been fully restored to its former glory and is now considered one of the most outstanding monuments of Baroque and Rococo art in northern Europe. Take a guided tour through the Palace halls and private quarters, enjoy lunch in its restaurant and explore the Baroque style park and rose garden. This afternoon we journey south and after crossing the border into Lithuania, we visit the Hill of Crosses, a pilgrimage site to the north of the city of

Siauliai. Enjoy a brief visit before we continue on to Klaipeda and check in to the National Hotel for a two night stay. (B, L, D)

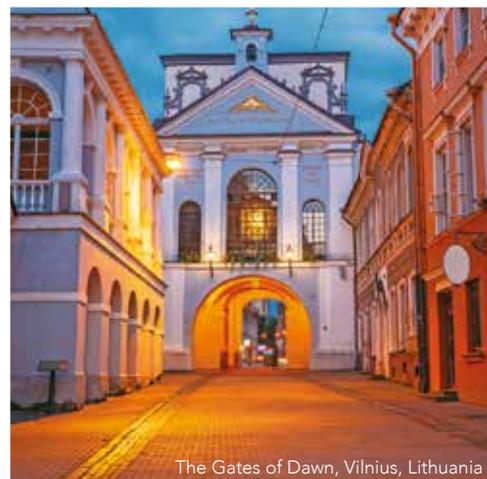
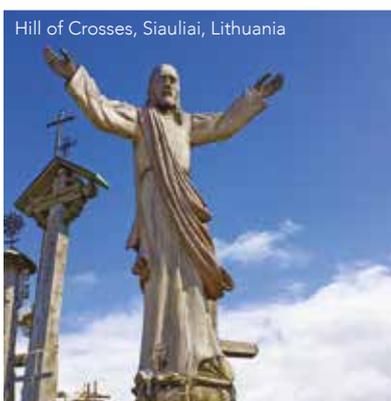
**Day 4 Klaipeda & the Curonian Spit.** After breakfast we take a panoramic drive through Klaipeda and a ferry across to the Curonian Peninsula, a UNESCO-listed 60 mile long curved sand dune spit that separates the lagoon from the Baltic Sea coast. Admire the beautiful craftsmanship of 80 carved wooden sculptures at the Hill of Witches near Juodkrante before driving to the main settlement of Nida, home to a collection of traditional fishermen's houses and weathervanes. Following lunch at a local restaurant continue to the 52 metre high Great Dune for panoramic views over the dunes and lagoon. On a clear day it is possible to see into the Russian territory on Kaliningrad at the southern end of the Spit. (B, L)

**Day 5 Plateliai, Lapiai & Kaunas.** This morning we drive to Plateliai National Park, where we will visit the nuclear missile site built under great secrecy in 1960 by the Soviets. From here nuclear missiles were targeted towards the biggest European cities including Berlin, London, Madrid and Paris. It was from this very same site in 1962 that missiles were deployed to Cuba in what became known as the Cuban missile crisis. We will visit the four remaining decommissioned nuclear missile silos, their





Riga Cathedral and the Old Town, Latvia



control station and the underground facilities, giving an insight into the hidden secrets of the Cold War period. After lunch we visit Lapiai and the home of the first British defence attache to Lithuania. He will recount stories of his life from his time as a bomber pilot, a diplomat during the Cold War in Moscow and of life now in independent Lithuania. We will visit his refurbished old house and the original outbuildings built in 1926, wander around the large garden and see the Lapiai Castle Hill. Following the visit transfer to Kaunas and check in to the Daugirdas Hotel for an overnight stay. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 6 Rumsiskes, Trakai & Vilnius.** After breakfast at the hotel we will drive to Rumsiskes, home to an open-air ethnographical museum. The 150 cottages, windmills and even a church were transferred here from different villages to give an authentic representation of life in Lithuania in the 19th century. En-route to Vilnius we will stop in Trakai, the first capital of Lithuania and home to the stunning Trakai Castle, a well preserved 15th century castle beautifully located on the lake. Following lunch at a local restaurant we transfer to Lithuania's capital Vilnius for a two night stay at the Imperial Hotel. (B, L)

**Day 7 Vilnius.** We have a full day to explore the Old Town of Vilnius which was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1994. Our city tour will commence with a walk to the Gates of Dawn, historically the gates of Vilnius' original defensive walls. The tour continues with a panoramic drive around Vilnius. Make a short stop to see St Anne's Church, one of the city's best known landmarks and a masterpiece of the late Gothic period and also stop at the 17th century Peter and Paul's church. After a short stroll through the winding streets of Vilnius Old Town we visit the 14th century Vilnius University. Following time for an independent lunch in the Old Town, visit the KGB Museum, representing the darkest days of the Soviet era. Return to the hotel for an evening at leisure. (B)

**Day 8 Minsk, Belarus.** Following an early breakfast transfer to Vilnius station and join a train for the transfer to Minsk, one of Europe's least visited capitals. Badly damaged in World War II, much of the city was rebuilt in typical Stalinist style in the 1950s, though our tour will begin in the Trinity District, an historic neighbourhood on the banks of the Svislach River that retains plenty of examples of 19th century buildings. Whilst here we will walk to the Island of Tears, a memorial to the Soviet Afghanistan war, before we transfer to the Upper Town to visit the Virgin Mary Church and the impressive Orthodox Cathedral. We will have

lunch at a local restaurant before driving to Independence and Victory Squares. Our final stop will be a visit to the World War II museum. Check in to the Double Tree Hilton Hotel for a two night stay. (B, L, D)

**Day 9 Nesvizh.** Following breakfast drive to the small town of Nesvizh, whose palace and castle complex is one of the architectural treasures of Belarus. Construction work took place through the 16th to 19th centuries and therefore combined the techniques of Medieval, Renaissance and Classical architecture with the distinctive art of local craftsmen. Explore the many rooms of the palace and wander around the beautiful parklands before we enjoy lunch in the castle restaurant. Transfer back to the hotel for some free time before meeting for dinner. En-route we will visit the Ballet and Opera Theatre for a guided tour before enjoying a farewell dinner at a local restaurant which offers panoramic views of the city. (B, L, D)

**Day 10 Minsk to London.** Transfer to Minsk airport for your return scheduled flight to London. (B)

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2020	2021
Twin	£3095	£3195
Single	£3595	£3695

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Nine nights hotel accommodation as described • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

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

**NB:** This tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and navigating many cobblestoned streets and uneven paths. For security reasons portage assistance is not available at Vilnius Station. Guests will be expected to take their own luggage from the coach, through passport control and up onto the platform.

# A WEEK ON LAKE CONSTANCE

Discover beautiful Lake Constance & the surrounding region staying at the Steigenberger Insel Hotel

4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> September 2020 & 4<sup>th</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> June 2021

Lake Constance occupies an extremely beautiful corner of Central Europe with its shores straddling Germany, Austria and Switzerland. For this new, escorted tour to the region we will be based at the Steigenberger Insel Hotel in the town of Konstanz which sits prettily on the German stretch of the northwest shore, where the Rhine River meets the lake. This is an area rich in castles, Baroque churches, charming town squares and pretty villages and highlights of our stay will include a tour to Mainau, the 45-hectare Flower Island, exploring the fairytale scenery of the Black Forest, visiting the curious museums including the Zeppelin Museum which outlines the airship's history and Arenenberg Castle with its wonderful gardens.



The Steigenberger Insel Hotel is scenically positioned on the shores of the lake and when you can stir yourself from this idyllic setting there is a wealth of wonderful things to see and do and we have devised an itinerary which includes a perfect combination of included tours and ample time at leisure. If you enjoy gentle walking, there is nothing better than a lakeside walk which is one seemingly endless water-view garden amidst much surrounding beauty as the region benefits from a mild climate with exotic plants and flowers on display.





Tulip meadow on the flower island of Mainau



Medieval village of Meersburg



Arenenberg Castle and Gardens

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Zurich, Switzerland.** Fly by scheduled flight to Zurich. On arrival transfer to the Steigenberger Insel Hotel located on the German shores of Lake Constance, known as Bodensee in German. En-route visit the delightful village of Stein am Rhein with its half-timbered houses and façade frescoes. Enjoy a light lunch before continuing to Europe's largest waterfall at Schaffhausen, where you have a magnificent view of this majestic natural spectacle. Afterwards cross the border to Germany to reach our hotel which is located in Konstanz. Enjoy a welcome dinner in the hotel this evening. (L, D)

**Day 2 Konstanz, Germany.** After breakfast meet for a guided walking tour through the old town of Konstanz. We begin with a stroll along the narrow lanes of Niederburg, Konstanz's oldest district, with its rambling lanes and rich patrician houses, many dating back to the 13th century. Visit the famous Minster with its magnificent neo-Gothic architecture before ending at Imperia, a 30 feet high statue inspired by a 16th century Italian courtesan of the same name. It bears in each hand the symbol of earthly and divine power, a reference to the many church dignitaries who attended the Council of Konstanz in the 15th century. While highly controversial on its conception in 1933, it is now regarded as the symbol of Konstanz. (B)

**Day 3 Black Forest.** Depart this morning for a tour of the beautiful scenery of the Black Forest. Learn how the Black Forest got its name and marvel at the incredibly deep forests before reaching our first stop, Triberg. Here we will visit the highest waterfall in Germany and enjoy a walk alongside the torrents. Continue to the typical Black Forest village of Furtwangen, famous for its cuckoo clock makers and enjoy some time at leisure for an independent lunch in one of the many excellent cafes. Our next stop is in the university town of Freiburg, where on a walking tour we will see the splendidly maintained Old Town, the cathedral and the two famous gates – Martin's gate and the Swabian gate, both part of the city walls. After some free time in the Old Town, return to Konstanz and enjoy the evening at leisure. (B)

**Day 4 The Flower Island of Mainau.** Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before we depart for a visit to Mainau, an island famous for its abundance of flowers. Taking advantage of the benign climate conditions of Lake Constance, the island offers an incredible year-round floral spectacle across 45 hectares. The island houses themed gardens which are a delight depending on the season and includes a Rhododendron Slope, Italian Rose Garden, Dahlia Garden and Hydrangea Path. See exotic trees, flowers and plants from all over the world. We will have a tour followed by free time to enjoy the garden independently. (B)

**Day 5 Friedrichshafen & Meersburg.** After breakfast cross the lake by car ferry to visit the town of Friedrichshafen, home to the fascinating Zeppelin Museum. The museum is not only dedicated to the famous Zeppelin airship, the LZ 129 Hindenburg, but also houses an impressive exhibition on the history of airship travel from its beginnings in the 18th century to the present. Continue to the delightful lakeside town of Meersburg where we will have a walking tour and lunch in a local restaurant. Finish the day with a tasting of local wines produced in the region before returning to the hotel by car ferry for an evening at leisure. (B, L)

**Day 6 Arenenberg.** This morning visit the Arenenberg estate and castle. The step-daughter of Napoleon Bonaparte chose this castle for her residence in exile after the defeat at Waterloo and enlarged and decorated it to make it the jewel it is today. After a guided tour, take some time to walk through the beautiful garden at your own pace. Enjoy coffee and cake while admiring the stunning view over the lower lake and surrounding countryside before returning to the hotel to enjoy a leisurely final afternoon. In the evening, we will meet for a farewell dinner served in a local restaurant. (B, D)

**Day 7 Zurich, Switzerland to London.** After breakfast bid farewell to Lake Constance and transfer to Zurich airport for the return scheduled flight to London. (B)

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	2020	2021
Garden View Double Room	£2795	£2895
Lake View Double Room	£2995	£3095
Garden View Single Room	£3295	£3395
Lake View Single Room	£3495	£3595

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Six nights hotel accommodation at the Steigenberger Insel Hotel • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# YOUR HOTEL – STEIGENBERGER INSEL HOTEL



Steigenberger Insel Hotel

The Steigenberger Insel Hotel boasts a spectacular location on a private island on Germany's largest lake, Lake Constance. Formerly a Dominican monastery with an interesting history dating back to the 13th century, it is now a five-star hotel with breathtaking lake views. The hotel provides an ideal location for relaxation or from which to explore the historic town of Konstanz, with its cobbled streets and old town, as well as the nearby attractions.

## Your Accommodation

The hotel has 100 rooms and two suites, all elegantly furnished and with wonderful views of the lake or gardens. Each room features an en-suite bathroom, air-conditioning, flat-screen TV with Sky and radio, mini-bar, desk, safe and complimentary Wi-Fi.

**Garden View Rooms:** These rooms are located on the hotel's garden side where you will be transported back in time as you take in the ambience of the former monastery. The Double Rooms measure 24 to 33 square metres with a fixed double bed. The en-suite bathroom has a shower over bathtub and WC. The Single Rooms measure 20 to 26 square metres with a single bed.

**Lake View Rooms:** These rooms are located on the lake side of the hotel where you can enjoy the gentle lapping waves of Lake Constance throughout your stay. The Double Rooms measure 30 to 40 square metres with a fixed double bed. The en-suite bathroom has a shower over bathtub and WC. The Single Rooms measure 24 square metres with a single bed.

## Your Dining

The hotel has two restaurants. The Seerestaurant offers a lavish buffet breakfast as well as lunch and dinner featuring international cuisine and fish dishes prepared from the morning's catch. It provides an elegant, historic atmosphere and looks onto the hotel terrace which is a magnificent spot from which to enjoy a sundowner and take in the lake views. The second restaurant, Dominikaner Stube is furnished entirely in Swiss pine and recalls the hotel's monastic history. It serves delicious regional specialities in spectacular style. When the weather permits, enjoy sitting out on the Lakeside Terrace where light dishes, coffee, cake and ice cream are served from the bar. For a quiet drink in the evening enjoy a glass of local wine or choice of drinks from the Zeppelin Bar.

## Your Space

The hotel benefits from a well-equipped gym, a Finnish sauna and steam room, and special treatments and massages can also be booked onsite. In addition, there are lakeside trails around Lake Constance which are perfect for a relaxing walk or bike ride.



The Lakeside Terrace



Garden View Double Room



Lake View Single Room



Lake View Double Room



Dominikaner Stube Restaurant



# TREASURES OF ARMENIA

An escorted tour discovering the cultural & scenic wonders of Armenia combined with a two night stay in Kiev, Ukraine

8<sup>th</sup> to 20<sup>th</sup> September 2020; 25<sup>th</sup> May to 6<sup>th</sup> June & 7<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Landlocked Armenia boasts beautiful scenery, a fascinating and diverse cultural history and some exquisite churches and monasteries. This comprehensive escorted tour will explore the many facets of this ancient land and also include ample time at leisure to enjoy the lively café culture of the capital city, Yerevan, one of the world's oldest inhabited cities and home to numerous museums.

Some thirty years before Rome was founded, Yerevan was an important stop along the caravan routes from Asia to Europe and over the years has been invaded by Assyrians, Romans, Byzantines, Persians, Arabs, Seljuks, Mongols, the Turks and later by the Soviet Red Army, making for a captivating history with the many invading influences evident in the architecture.

Armenia was the first country in the world to adopt Christianity as its state religion and is scattered with Christian places of worship, many in stunning locations such as the Sevanavank Monastery located on the shore of Lake Sevan, the largest lake in the Caucasus, and the Etchmiadzin Cathedral, one of the oldest cathedrals in the world, both of which we will visit.

Aside from learning of the intricate cultural history of the land, we will visit the Ararat brandy factory (a reputed favourite tippie of Winston Churchill), enjoy a vocal concert and have the opportunity to interact with villagers.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Kiev, Ukraine.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this evening and transfer to the Opera Hotel, Kiev for a two night stay. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening. (D)

**Day 2 Kiev.** This morning enjoy a guided tour of this vibrant and friendly capital city including Pecherska Lavra and St Sophia Cathedral. Erected in 1037 by unknown architects in Russian-Byzantine style to commemorate the victory of King Yaroslav the Wise over the Petcheneg tribes, the cathedral contains a unique collection of mosaics composed of different colours and shades, and frescoes on religious and secular themes. (B, L)

**Day 3 Kiev to Yerevan, Armenia.** After breakfast in the hotel transfer to the airport for the scheduled flight to Yerevan, Armenia. Arrive this afternoon and check in to the Grand Hotel, our base for the next five nights. Enjoy time to settle in before our welcome dinner in a local restaurant this evening. (B, D)

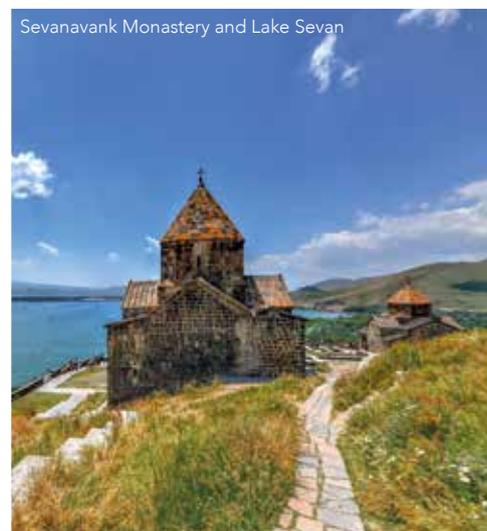
**Day 4 Yerevan.** After breakfast we will explore the Armenian capital, Yerevan. During our city tour see Republic Square, Abovyan Street and City Park and visit the Genocide Memorial and the museum dedicated to the victims of the Great Genocide that took place in 1915. Also visit the Cascade which houses the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts, dedicated to bringing contemporary art from all over the world to Armenia and presenting the best of Armenian culture to the world. After lunch visit the History Museum. Enjoy dinner this evening in a local restaurant with authentic Armenian cuisine. (B, L, D)

**Day 5 Yerevan.** Today we further explore Yerevan starting with a visit to Matenadaran, a museum and scientific institute of ancient manuscripts which holds one of the world's richest collections of Medieval manuscripts and books spanning a broad range of historical and cultural

subjects. We continue to the Carpet Museum where specially trained weavers demonstrate traditional methods of Armenian carpet making. For lunch, enjoy a selection of Armenian cuisine before visiting a brandy factory. Brandy is a strong part of Armenian culture and heritage and has been for generations. Learn the local processes they use and special grape varieties chosen, finishing with a tasting of the local produce. (B, L)

**Day 6 Etchmiadzin & Zvartnots.** This morning following breakfast we make our way to the city of Etchmiadzin. The main cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is reputed to be one of the world's oldest cathedrals and is a special place of pilgrimage for all Armenians around the world. After a tour of the cathedral enjoy a special authentic lunch hosted by an Armenian family. On our return journey to Yerevan we will stop en-route at Zvartnots Cathedral. Built in the 7th century AD, this UNESCO World Heritage Site is today unfortunately in ruins, but even in ruins it reflects its unique architectural value and is still an impressive sight. (B, L)

**Day 7 Khor Virap & Noravank.** This morning we will drive to Khor Virap Monastery which dates back to the 4th century. From here admire the beauty of Mount Ararat in the distance and also see the closed border between Turkey and Armenia located just 20 kilometres away. We will visit the chapel which was constructed over the deep dungeon where Gregory the Illuminator, the patron saint and first official head of the Armenian Apostolic Church, was imprisoned for 13 years. We then make our way towards Noravank, travelling through countryside that emerges into a scenic rocky mountainous gorge. The hot and dry climate makes this area renowned for wine making and is believed to be the location of the oldest winery, dating back 6000 years. We will visit the 13th century monastery standing high in the valley surrounded by red cliffs before enjoying lunch in a local restaurant. (B, L)



**Day 8 Sevan Lake & Dilijan.** Today we make our way to Dilijan, commonly known by locals as the small Switzerland of Armenia. The town is surrounded by dense forest with surprisingly rich vegetation and offers a cool and refreshing climate to the arid surrounds. En-route visit Sevanavank Monastery, originally made from three churches the monastery was built on an island on Sevan Lake. The island monastery was, according to historians of the time, used both for worship and pilgrimage and as a place of exile for Armenian noblemen who had fallen into disgrace. The receding waters in the 20th century created the current peninsula you see today. Enjoy a scenic panoramic view of the lake and transfer to Dilijan where we will enjoy lunch before continuing to the Haghartsin Monastery, beautifully nestled in the heart of the forest. Later check in to the Best Western Paradise Hotel for a two night stay. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 9 Dilijan & Molokan Village.** Following a leisurely breakfast embark on a short walking tour of the quaint town of Dilijan before driving to see the 13th century Goshavank monastic complex that is named after Mkhitar Gosh, a prominent writer, lawyer and author of the Code of Law. We will have a late lunch in a Molokan village at one of the local houses where we can learn of the lifestyle of the village people. Dinner will be in the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 10 Ashtarak & Yerevan.** After breakfast drive to Ashtarak, passing through Vanadzor, the 3rd largest city in Armenia, where you can still see traces of the Soviet Union times. In Ashtarak visit the 13th century Saghmsovank Monastery that received its name from the religious ecclesiastical songs performed in the monastery. Following a local lunch we will continue to Yerevan and check in to the Grand Hotel for a three night stay. Enjoy dinner in a local restaurant this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 11 Geghard & Garni.** After breakfast we drive to the Geghard Cave Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage Site that is partially carved out of the adjacent mountain, assuring the great acoustics of this sacred place. We will enjoy a vocal concert of Medieval Armenian songs inside the cave. A short transfer takes us to Garni village, where during lunch we will enjoy traditional Armenian cuisine. After lunch we will visit the Garni pagan temple, built in the 1st century AD and a UNESCO

World Heritage Site. Sited on a hillside high above the Azat River, Garni is the only pagan temple that remains in Armenia after the adoption of Christianity. Inside we will enjoy a special Duduk performance, the national musical instrument made of apricot tree. (B, L)

**Day 12 Aragatsotn Wine Region & Yerevan.** This morning we stop at a local food market before driving to the region of Aragatsotn to visit a winery. The volcanic soil in the region is rich in minerals and properties that, along with the ample sunshine, makes the perfect climate for growing grapes. Visit the picturesque wine estate set against the backdrop of the inspiring Mount Ararat, Ara and Aragats and enjoy a wine tasting of different varieties and lunch. Return to Yerevan for some time at leisure. This evening our farewell dinner will be held at a local restaurant. (B, L, D)

**Day 13 Yerevan to London.** After breakfast transfer to the airport for our return scheduled indirect flight to London. (B)

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2020	2021
Twin	£2995	£3145
Single	£3495	£3645

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights hotel accommodation as described • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

**NB:** We have planned the itinerary to be less strenuous than most to the region, however, please note that the tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and some long drives. Many of the sites are reached by uneven steps without handrails. To best enjoy your experiences in Armenia, you should be in good physical condition.

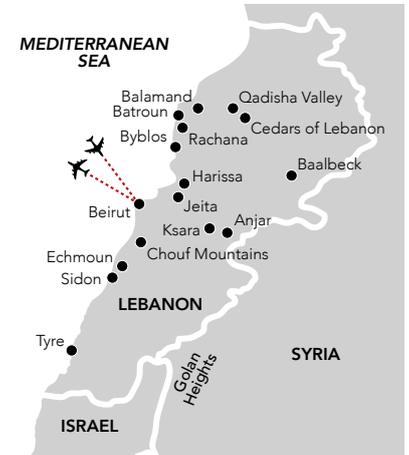
# LEBANON – CROSSROADS OF CULTURES

An escorted tour of the historical & cultural wonders of Lebanon staying at Le Gray, Beirut

24<sup>th</sup> September to 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2020 & 15<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> April 2021

Lebanon's location at the crossroads of the Mediterranean and Arabia has shaped the country's rich history and cultural identity and from impressive Roman ruins to Medieval Crusader castles and remnants of the country's Phoenician, Persian, Arab and French-colonial past, there is much to explore. True, it is a country with a turbulent past but those prepared to look beyond the headlines will discover a truly captivating land with incredible historical and archaeological sites, stunning scenery and welcoming and hospitable people.

We will be based in the cosmopolitan capital of Beirut which, with many parts of the city having been reconstructed since the Civil War, is slowly reclaiming its title of 'Paris of the Middle East'. From here we will journey through mountainous landscapes covered in majestic cedar trees in the Chouf Mountains, wander through the stunning cave system at Jeita Grotto and discover the ancient settlements of Byblos and Batroun on the shimmering Mediterranean coast. In the north of the country we head to the hills of the Qadisha Valley with its rock-cut monasteries, wildflowers and isolated villages and in the south we will visit Sidon with its atmospheric souks and the magnificent ruins at Tyre. A memorable experience for many will be standing in front of the magnificent Roman temples of Baalbek, the most impressive site in Lebanon and arguably the best-preserved ruins in the Middle East. The highlights of our tour are endless and we hope you can join us on what promises to be a unique journey through a fascinating yet underappreciated country.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Beirut, Lebanon.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive late this evening and transfer to Le Gray Hotel for our eight night stay.

**Day 2 Beirut & the Chouf.** After breakfast at the hotel we journey south from Beirut, hugging the Mediterranean coast with its numerous beach resorts before heading inland and starting the climb into the beautiful Chouf Mountains. Just an hour outside the capital, the region has a rich geographical, cultural and ethnic identity that sets it apart from the rest of the country. We visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site at Deir el Qamar and explore the Ottoman-era town on foot. Continue to Beiteddine, the 'house of faith'. This glorious palace occupies a rocky spur overlooking a valley and is a superb example of early 19th century Lebanese architecture. The palace was created as the home for Emir Bechir Chehab II who lived here until he was forced into exile in 1840. For several decades it was used by the Ottomans as the government residence, then in 1934 it was declared a historic monument and has

since been used as the president's summer house. After lunch at a local restaurant we return to Beirut and visit the National Museum this afternoon. Dinner will be served at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 3 Jeita, Harissa & Byblos.** This morning we visit one of Lebanon's greatest natural wonders, the stunning Jeita Grotto cave system in the Nahr al-Kalb valley, 11 miles to the north east of Beirut. Take a short boat trip to discover the Lower Cave before visiting the Upper Cave, home to one of the largest hanging stalactites in the world. We continue on to nearby Harissa where we take a cable car up to the Shrine of Our Lady of Lebanon, which offers wonderful views over the Bay of Jounieh. After a local lunch we visit Byblos, said to be one of the oldest continuously inhabited settlements in the world. Once a Crusader stronghold, the ancient port is today a charming town of pretty flower-decked houses and stepped lanes encircled by Medieval walls and topped by a Crusader castle. Explore the ramparts and admire the views across the



Beiteddine Palace



The Crusader Sea Castle at Sidon



Cedars of God Nature Reserve

circular harbour before visiting the 12th century Church of St John the Baptist with its modern bell tower, the lively harbour and bustling souks. (B, L)

**Day 4 Rachana, Balamand & Batroun.** As we leave the city behind this morning, the winding country road to Rachana is marked by large sculptures that have become part of the landscape alongside almond and olive trees – organic forms made from stone, wood and metal. Set in the Batroun region, the village of Rachana is an open-air art museum for the work of the Basbous brothers, a family of prolific sculptors. Continue north to Balamand where we visit the Orthodox Monastery, positioned majestically in the hills affording a breathtaking view of the Mediterranean. After a stop for lunch we will visit Batroun, a treasure trove of Phoenician, Roman and Byzantine history that is probably best-known today for its beaches. Its existence can be traced all the way back to pre-historic times, with early tools retrieved within caves along the Nahr el Jaouz river. Today's town is a delight to explore and a quieter alternative to the hustle and bustle of Beirut. We also pass by Mseilha Fort, a Medieval fort built by Emir Fakhreddine to guard the route from Tripoli to Beirut. (B, L)

**Day 5 The Cedars of Lebanon & Qadisha Valley.** This morning we return to the scenic north of the country as we head up into the hills and the celebrated Valley of Qozhaya, home to the Monastery of Saint Anthony, situated at a height of 3000 feet above sea level and surrounded by pine and oak-clad hills. Visit the monastery and its famous cave before ascending further to the Cedars of God Nature Reserve. The ancient cedar forest once spanned the entire area and its timber was favoured by the Egyptians, Romans, and Persians, to name a few. Sadly, exploitation has led to mass deforestation and this forest is now rigorously protected as a World Heritage Site. Take a walk among the imposing trees, some with trunks spanning more than thirty feet across. This afternoon visit the Mar Lichaa Monastery, savouring some spectacular views as we travel through the beautiful Qadisha Valley. (B, L)

**Day 6 Baalbeck, Ksara & Anjar.** Travel to Baalbeck - one of the wonders of the ancient world and Lebanon's greatest Roman treasure. Dating back 4000 years, Baalbeck's remarkable ruins are an astounding testimony to the wealth and power of Imperial Rome and the well-preserved site is famed for its amazing temples and monumental scale. Baalbeck's main attractions are the magnificent Jupiter Temple and Temple of Bacchus. The remaining six Corinthian columns are a potent reminder of the former grandeur of the Jupiter Temple while the imposing Temple of Bacchus is remarkably intact apart from its roof. We continue to Chateau Ksara, which has been producing Lebanese wine since 1857, and tour the historic two-kilometre Roman caves. The constant temperature is well-suited for storage of the rarest and finest vintages and we will enjoy a tasting here of some of the estates' wines. After lunch we visit the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Anjar, established during the Umayyad period by Caliph

Walid Bin Abed Al Malak at the beginning of the 8th century. The ruins we see today were only discovered by archaeologists at the end of the 1940s, and their excavations revealed a rectangular fortified city which is surrounded by walls and guarded by forty towers. (B, L)

**Day 7 Sidon, Tyre & Echmoun.** After breakfast at the hotel, head south to Sidon, the largest city in the south of the country. Known locally as Saïda, the city's northern harbour is graced by the iconic sea castle, erected in the early 13th century by the knights of St John. We will also see the old souks and the 17th century Khan el Franj, a marketplace built to accommodate French merchants and goods in order to develop trade with Europe. After lunch head further south to Tyre, one of the oldest continually inhabited cities in the world, where we visit its two UNESCO sites, the al-Mina and al-Bass archaeological parks. We will see the aqueduct, a second-century triumphal arch, the hippodrome and impressive necropolis. Return to Beirut via the temple complex of Echmoun, originally constructed in Phoenician times but added to in the Roman and Byzantine periods. (B, L)

**Day 8 Beirut.** Enjoy a day at leisure to further explore this most fascinating of cities. Meet this evening for a farewell dinner at the hotel. (B, D)

**Day 9 Beirut to London.** After an early breakfast in the hotel transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. (B)

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

#### ROOM CATEGORY

Deluxe Room	£3295
Premium Room	£3395
Deluxe Room for sole use	£3995
Premium Room for sole use	£4195

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Eight nights hotel accommodation in Beirut • Meals as shown (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer & soft drinks with included meals (note wine and beer will only be offered where available) • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

**Important Information:** Please note that if your passport contains an Israeli stamp you may be refused entry into Lebanon.

## YOUR HOTEL – LE GRAY BEIRUT

For the duration of our stay we will be based at Le Gray, Beirut, one of the city's most iconic luxury hotels and a member of The Leading Hotels of the World. Nestled in the heart of downtown Beirut, the hotel overlooks Martyrs' Square and is within walking distance of the city's shoreline, the renowned restaurants of the Gemmayzeh district and the shopping district. From 1975 to 1990 the area was razed by civil war but the restored neighbourhood (known as Solidere) is now the energetic soul of the city's new identity. This contemporary hotel features 103 sleek and modern rooms, a luxurious spa and a rooftop pool and terrace with marvellous 360 degree views over Beirut's fascinating skyline.



### Your Accommodation

Le Gray, Beirut has some of the most spacious bedrooms and suites in the city. Designed with comfort and relaxation in mind, the rooms feature neutral décor with colour palettes in pastel shades of dusty blue, sage green and lilac. All rooms and suites are air-conditioned and feature spacious bathrooms with REN toiletries, hairdryer and bathrobes, LCD TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, work desk, tea and coffee making facilities, minibar and daily fresh fruit.

### Standard Rooms

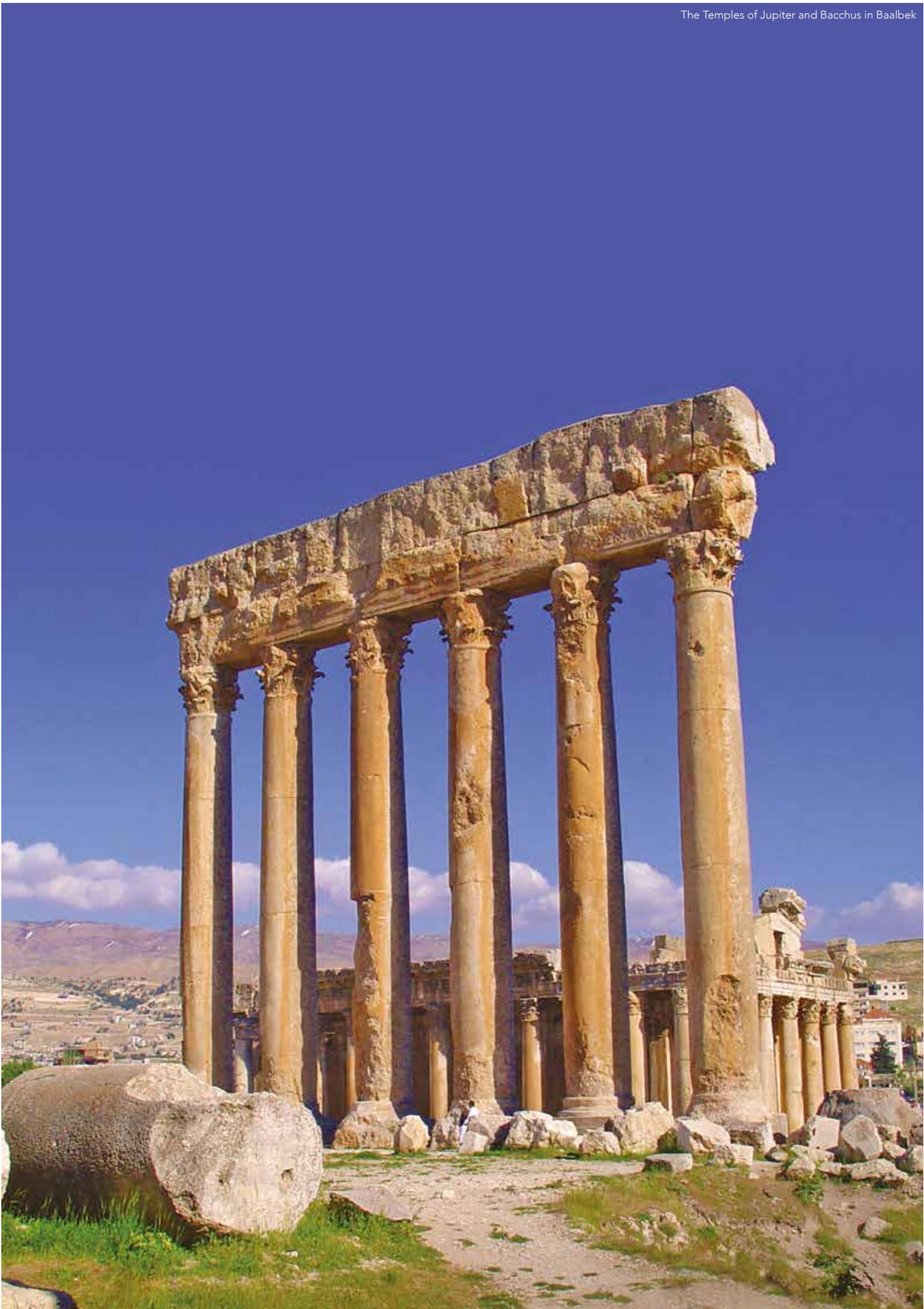
**Deluxe Rooms:** Measuring 40 square metres, the Deluxe Rooms are spacious and can be configured as either a king size double or twin. The floor to ceiling windows offer views of either the historical downtown or Weygand Street.

**Premium Rooms:** The Premium Rooms offer a generous 50 square metres of space and feature a super king bed as well as a balcony with views of the historic downtown.

### Your Space

The hotel's public areas include three lounges offering nibbles and drinks throughout the day: The Pool Lounge rooftop bar and terrace with its spectacular panoramic views; the opulent Cigar Lounge; and the Lobby Lounge which offers a relaxing space by day or night. The hotel also boasts an outdoor heated infinity pool, a well-appointed spa, a small gym and an array of restaurants and bars. On the ground floor, chic Gordon's Café offers casual all-day brasserie style dining and Indigo on the Roof serves breakfast, lunch and dinner in the sunlit dining room or outdoor terrace.





# GLORIES OF BYZANTIUM

A seven night escorted exploration of Istanbul & its surrounds

3<sup>rd</sup> to 10<sup>th</sup> October 2020 & 8<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> May 2021

Founded by the Greeks in the seventh century BC, Istanbul served as the victorious capital city for both the Byzantine Empire, when it became known as Constantinople, and the Ottoman Empire and for centuries has been a bustling metropolis. It is blessed with a magnificent natural setting on the Bosphorus Strait and, having operated voyages around the Black Sea for over twenty years, we thought it was time to devise an escorted tour which allows for more time to discover the many facets of this deeply fascinating and historically important city where East meets West.

Our in-depth tour will explore Istanbul's relatively compact Old City with its outstanding architectural history including the glorious mosaics in the Byzantine sixth-century cathedral of Hagia Sophia, the Topkapi Palace and the beautiful Blue Mosque. We will stroll through the labyrinth of shops and markets in the Grand Bazaar, and the Greek and Jewish quarters, to learn more of the city's diverse cultural heritage. We will enjoy a private cruise on the breathtaking Bosphorus, from where we can admire the incredible skyline dotted with Mosques and minarets, as well as a full day tour to the idyllic Princes' Islands. A highlight for many will be our visit to the astonishing town of Edirne, once the thriving capital of the Ottoman Empire, where we will visit the great Selimiye Mosque, one of Sinan's finest.

During the course of our stay there will be ample time to explore independently or relax at the hotel and we have devised the itinerary so that you can choose where you dine on several evenings, perhaps soak up the atmosphere at one of the Bosphorus front fish restaurants or dine alfresco in one of the city's many rooftop restaurants. Difficult to convey in words, the essence of Istanbul has to be experienced and our escorted visit offers the ideal opportunity.



The Blue Mosque

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Istanbul, Turkey.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive in the late afternoon and transfer to the Pera Palace Hotel for a seven night stay. A welcome dinner will be held in the hotel this evening. **(D)**

**Day 2 Sultanahmet.** After breakfast at the hotel we start our exploration of Istanbul at the Hippodrome, the centre of civic life in the capital of the Byzantine Empire and the site of speeches, chariot races, and riots. Next, visit the nearby Blue Mosque, named for its glorious 17th century painted tiles; and the Hagia Sophia, first a Byzantine patriarchal basilica, later an imperial mosque and today a museum. Known for its massive domed roof and colourful mosaics, this structure is widely regarded as the world's finest example of Byzantine architecture. A short walk brings us to the Basilica Cistern, which dates back to the 6th century and is supported by 336 Corinthian columns making it one of the most magnificent covered cisterns in Istanbul. This afternoon take a walking tour of Istiklal street, the most famous avenue in Istanbul before returning to the hotel for an evening at leisure. **(B, L)**

**Day 3 Fener & Balat.** Our day begins with a visit to the Suleymaniye Mosque, the largest in the city and a masterpiece of the 16th century architect Sinan. Continue on to the small yet lavishly decorated Chora Church, which is part of a Byzantine monastery complex (now a museum) originally built outside the city walls of Constantine the Great, and view the many frescoes and mosaics depicting the beginnings of Christianity. Later enjoy an orientation tour along the ancient walls of Istanbul and a stop at Fener Greek Quarter, visiting the Greek Patriarchate and Orthodox Church and Balat, the Jewish Quarter, which dates back to the Byzantine period. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, sampling fine Ottoman cuisine and spend the remainder of the afternoon exploring Istanbul independently. **(B, L)**

**Day 4 Princes' Islands.** There is no better way to escape the bustle of Istanbul for a day than with a visit to the idyllic Princes' Islands.



Hagia Sophia



Buyukada



Topkapi Palace



Galata Tower

Enjoy cool breezes and charming sights along the way to Buyukada, the largest island in the chain. Famous for their mild climate, lush vegetation, and ornate Ottoman houses, all the islands are unspoiled by traffic. Instead of cars there are carriages, called phaetons, which we will use to tour the island and its beautiful scenery studded with elegant mansions draped with purple bougainvillea, reminiscent of a more leisurely and graceful era. We will take lunch at one of the many fish restaurants that line the waterfront, gazing across the Asian shore of Istanbul, so close – though it feels worlds away. Returning to Sultanahmet by local boat, a short coach transfer will return us to the hotel in the late afternoon. **(B, L)**

**Day 5 Topkapi Palace & the Grand Bazaar.** Start the morning with a tour to the Istanbul Archaeological Museum that houses over a million ancient objects originating in all parts of the Mediterranean region. These include the Alexander sarcophagus, said to have been created for Alexander the Great; remnants of the Ishtar Gate in Babylon, and the 8th century BCE Siloam inscription from Jerusalem - among the oldest existing record of its kind written in Hebrew. Continue on to the impressive Topkapi Palace, a complex of buildings and annexes that was used as the Imperial residence of the Ottoman Sultans for nearly 400 years. Since 1924 it has been preserved as a museum, and it is noted for its beautiful shaded courtyards and elegant architecture. Enjoy a local lunch followed by a visit to the Grand Bazaar. Originally constructed in 1464, it is one of the largest covered markets in the world, comprising an amazing 4400 shops and 40 inns along 64 streets. Enjoy some free time here, perhaps sharpening your bartering skills, before returning to the hotel. **(B, L)**

**Day 6 Edirne.** Today we will drive to Edirne, the former capital of the Ottoman Empire, located on the European border of modern day Turkey. Sinan, the most famous architect of the Ottoman era, chose this city for the construction of the spectacular Selimiye Mosque, nowadays a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Visit the mosque and underground Bazaar followed by lunch at a local restaurant. Afterwards we continue to the Sultan Beyazit II Mosque Complex, the largest set of religious buildings in Edirne. Besides the mosque and religious school, the complex boasts a hospital, with famously skilled surgeons, and an impressive octagonal dome. Last but not least, see the New Bridge constructed at the junction of Maritsa and Tunca

rivers between 1842 and 1847. Return back to Istanbul, arriving in the evening. **(B, L)**

**Day 7 Beyoglu & Pera.** This morning walk to the iconic Galata Tower, built by Genoese merchants in 1303 as a watch tower to warn of approaching pirate ships. Afterwards we will venture into Istanbul's famous Spice Market to enjoy the sounds and smells before heading out on a private cruise on the Bosphorus. Heading north and following the European shore we will pass Dolmabahce and Yildiz Palaces and sail as far as the Rumeli Fortress before crossing to the Asian side and returning past Beylerbeyi Palace. Returning to Karakoy Pier, we take the historic underground funicular train up to Beyoglu to return to our hotel. This evening enjoy a farewell reception and dinner to celebrate the end of our glorious week in Istanbul. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 8 Istanbul to London.** After breakfast transfer to the airport for our return scheduled flight to London. **(B)**

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	2020	2021
Deluxe Golden Horn View	£2895	£2995
Deluxe Golden Horn View for sole use	£3495	£3595

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights at the Pera Palace Hotel • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Excursions • Gratuities • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Transfers.

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

**NB:** Some of the excursions will include extended periods of walking including steps and over uneven terrain. We therefore do not recommend this tour for those with walking difficulties.

## CAPPADOCIA EXTENSION – 10<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020 & 15<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May 2021

After your stay in Istanbul we are offering the chance to explore Turkey further with a visit to central Turkey's Cappadocia region with its underground cities and otherworldly terrain of honeycombed hills and soaring boulders.



Nevsehir cave town, Cappadocia

### YOUR ACCOMMODATION – THE ARGOS IN CAPPADOCIA

Set on the eastern slope of Uchisar – the highest and one of the oldest villages of Cappadocia, the Argos, having previously been a monastery, a lodging house for Silk Road caravans and a linseed oil factory, has been transformed into a wonderful boutique hotel. Following a restoration project of more than 20 years, the stone buildings and cave dwellings have been transformed into 51 simple yet stylish rooms and suites amidst flower-filled gardens and outdoor terraces. The hotel's Seki restaurant, set on a terrace overlooking Pigeon Valley, offers Turkish delicacies accompanied by wines from the hotel's underground cellars.



### THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 Istanbul to Cappadocia, Turkey.** After breakfast transfer to the airport for our direct flight to Kayseri. On arrival transfer to the Argos in Cappadocia hotel for a three night stay. Located in Uchisar, on one of the highest points in Cappadocia, the area offers incredible views and en-route we will visit the Dovecote Valley, better known as Pigeon Valley, for stunning views of this unique landscape. Enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening. **(B, D)**

**Day 2 Kaymakli.** Spend the morning at leisure, taking in the scenery and enjoying the facilities of the hotel or join an optional early morning hot air balloon ride. This afternoon depart for lunch at a local restaurant followed by a visit to Kaymakli Underground City. By carving into the soft tufa rock, the local inhabitants created this incredible underground dwelling eight floors deep and stretching for miles underground. Across the four floors that are open to the public we will see evidence of life underground with spaces used as stables, storehouses and kitchens organised around ventilation shafts. This evening enjoy dinner in a local restaurant after which you may wish to join an optional excursion to see a Whirling Dervish performance. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 3 Zelve Valley & Goreme Open-Air Museum.** This morning we explore Zelve Valley, one of the earliest settled and last abandoned monastic valleys in Cappadocia. Spread across 1.5 kilometres, the topography is dramatic and wonderfully picturesque, with crags and pinnacles and steep valleys filled with many abandoned homes and churches to explore. Following a short break we will visit Goreme National Park and its Open Air Museum. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is filled with a network of human carved living quarters and cave

churches with beautiful Byzantium and Medieval frescoes. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure. This evening we will have dinner in the hotel. **(B, D)**

**Day 4 Cappadocia to London.** After breakfast this morning, transfer to Kayseri airport for the scheduled indirect flight to London. **(B)**

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	2020	2021
Twin	£1095	£1195
Single	£1495	£1595

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Internal flights between Istanbul and Kayseri  
• Three nights at the Argos Hotel in Cappadocia • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Excursions as described • Tour Manager • English-speaking local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance, visa, optional excursions (booked locally).

**NB:** The excursions will include extended periods of walking including steps, rough and uneven terrain and steep landscapes. The hotel is spread over multiple levels with many stairs and no lift. We therefore do not recommend this extension for those with walking difficulties.

## YOUR HOTEL – PERA PALACE HOTEL



The hotel entrance



Kubbeli Lounge

The Pera Palace Hotel was established in 1892 by the French-Ottoman architect AlexanderVallaury to accommodate travellers arriving on his Orient Express train from Paris, and it has accommodated many distinguished guests including Ernest Hemingway, Agatha Christie and Greta Garbo. Designed in Neoclassical, Art Nouveau and oriental styles, the hotel offers stunning views of the Golden Horn and is ideally located in the historic Pera district within walking distance of the famous Istiklal Street.

### Your Room

The hotel features 115 rooms and suites and combines 19th century elegance, such as high ceilings, chandeliers and Neoclassical furniture, with modern luxury and comfort. We will be accommodated in the spacious deluxe rooms which offer 30 square metres and views over the Golden Horn. The facilities include a king size bed, which can be configured as twin or double, and marble bathroom with a walk-in shower or shower over bathtub. For your comfort, the rooms also provide a safe, air-conditioning, ironing facilities, complimentary Wi-Fi and a 49" flat screen cable TV.

### Your Space

The hotel facilities include an indoor pool and Jacuzzi, a well-equipped fitness studio and a luxurious spa with three rooms devoted to treatments, a marble-clad Turkish hammam and a sauna. Dining options include the Agatha Restaurant featuring inventive dishes of French, Italian and Turkish cuisine in a fine dining setting. Guests can also enjoy an English Afternoon Tea at the Kubbeli Saloon Tea Lounge and the Orient Bar serves a selection of wine and cocktails throughout the evening.



Agatha Restaurant



Deluxe Golden Horn View room



Lobby

# A WEEK IN TUSCANY

Seven nights staying at the charming Villa il Poggiale

6<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> October 2020; 11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May & 5<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> October 2021

Italy has more than its fair share of beautiful places, but few would argue that its central region of Tuscany is one of its finest assets. In fact, with its pea-green vineyards, Medieval hilltop villages and rows of silver olive groves, some would go as far to say that it embodies the very essence of Italy. During our week long stay we will explore its many wonders from our delightful base at Villa il Poggiale, a restored Renaissance villa nestled deep in the Chianti hills. Our programme will include comprehensive sightseeing excursions including a visit to art-filled Florence with its historic churches and monuments, Medieval Siena with its beautiful scallop-shaped piazza and the mighty Duomo monument and Vinci, birthplace of Leonardo. We will also see picturesque castles and villages, handsome villas and their gardens and of course, no trip to Tuscany would be complete without a visit to a vineyard for a wine tasting. We have devised the itinerary to ensure that, in addition to the guided excursions, there is ample time to explore independently as well as to relax and enjoy the villa and its idyllic setting.

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Pisa, Italy.** Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to Villa il Poggiale, the base for our week in the Chianti hills. Check in to your room and relax at the villa before we meet for dinner tonight. (D)

**Day 2 Florence.** This morning we will drive the short distance to discover the historical city of Florence which lies on the River Arno and is surrounded by gentle hills, olive groves and vineyards. Founded by the Romans, the city fell in the 15th century to the rule of the Medici family who later became the Grand Dukes of Tuscany. During this period the city achieved new heights of glory in art, culture, politics and economic power. It is considered the birthplace of the Renaissance and is possibly one of the most beautifully preserved and artistically rich cities in the world. Here, artistic treasures and architectural masterpieces of the past blend with ancient streets lined with elegant boutiques, peaceful parks, streetside cafes offering steaming hot espressos and pastry shops, with breathtaking views at every turn. During our walk we will see the Duomo, with its Brunelleschi's works of art, Giotto's Bell Tower and the Baptistery, with such beautiful doors that Michelangelo called them the Gates of Paradise. Also see the Piazza Della Signoria, Palazzo Vecchio, Ponte Vecchio, the only bridge in Florence to survive the World War II bombings, and the Santa Croce Basilica. Enjoy free time for lunch and an afternoon to explore further at your own pace before we meet and transfer back to the villa for dinner. (B, D)

**Day 3 Vinci.** We have a free morning to relax in the villa, maybe sit by the pool or find a spot in the garden or lounge. In the early afternoon we will make our way to Vinci, the town where Leonardo da Vinci was born in 1452. Visit the Museo Leonardiano, Palazzina Uzielli and the Conti Guidi Castle which houses one of the broadest and most original collections devoted to Leonardo the engineer, the architect and the scientist, and to the history of Renaissance technology in general. We also visit the house where Leonardo was born surrounded by the centuries-old olive trees of Montalbano. After our visit we will make a stop at one of the local Chianti vineyards where we tour the ancient cellars and learn about the winemaking techniques. We will enjoy a tasting of some of the wines before being served a traditional Tuscan dinner. (B, D)



Cathedral of Santa Maria del Fiore, Florence

**Day 4 Siena & San Gimignano.** Drive this morning to mystical Siena, located in the heart of the Chianti wine region. A walking tour will highlight the fascinating historical sites situated within the well preserved walled city. These include the exquisite marble cathedral, the beautiful Mangia Tower, the Town Hall and the Fonte Gaia. Continue to the Piazza del Campo, the site of the famous "Palio", a horse race with no rules and one of the most colourful Italian festivals. Enjoy free time for lunch and the chance to explore further at your own pace before we meet and drive to San Gimignano. Here we walk back in time, exploring the well preserved Medieval village, the ancient squares and buildings, narrow and shady alleys and the soaring slender towers of this stunning town. In the centre of town we find the Cisterna, an elegant public fountain built in 1273. The square of the Duomo is the oldest part of San Gimignano and where we can marvel at the mighty towers of the Salvucci and simple, bare facade of the Collegiata, which is flanked by the Torre Grossa, and 13th century Palace of the Mayor. Together, these breathtaking sites combine to make this square one of the best preserved scenes of Medieval architecture. Return to the villa for dinner tonight. (B, D)

**Day 5 Villa Poggio Torselli.** This morning is free to relax at the villa, visit the local town of San Casciano or maybe take the chance to explore the surrounding areas by foot or by bicycle. Later this afternoon we will drive the short distance to the charming Villa Poggio Torselli. This magnificent Tuscan villa, accessed by a long driveway flanked by Cypress trees, was once inhabited by the Machiavelli family and was known as the "queen of the villas". It is particularly famous for its gardens which date from the late 17th century, and consist of an Italianate garden divided into two terraces to the south and an English park area to the north. Dwarf fruit trees, old-fashioned roses, aromatic herbs and flowers were planted and act as a frame for the Baroque chapel and the architecture of the three-storey villa. When the weather is warm, the potted citrus trees are carried out from the splendid limonaia into the open air. Meanwhile the interiors are characterised by colour, tromp l'oeil and allegorical paintings which were created at the end of the 17th century. After the visit to the villa and its gardens, we head to the cellar for a wine tasting. (B, D)



**Day 6 Florence & Villa di Poggio a Caiano.** Today we return to Florence and spend the morning at Palazzo Pitti and Boboli Gardens. This enormous palace is one of Florence's largest architectural monuments. The original palazzo, designed by Filippo Brunelleschi was built for the Pitti family in 1457. The original construction consisted of only the middle cube of the present building; in 1549, the property was sold to the Medici and became the primary residence of the Grand Ducal family. Today, Palazzo Pitti houses some of the most important museums in Florence. Behind the palace we can stroll around the famous Boboli Gardens, one of the greatest open-air museums in Florence, and admire the Egyptian Obelisk that was brought from Luxor in 1789. We will have lunch in Piazzale Michelangelo with views overlooking Florence and the Arno Valley before continuing to the Villa Medici di Poggio a Caiano. Set on the slopes of Mount Albano, it was built by Lorenzo De' Medici as a summer residence. It hosts two important, separate museums: one is the historical apartments and the other the Museum of Still Life. The Medici Villa at Poggio a Caiano is surrounded by lovely gardens which take the form of an English garden with shaded boulevards and picturesque views, while the other part mirrors the classic Italian garden with countless pots of lemons. Return to our villa for dinner. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 7 Castello del Trebbio.** After breakfast we drive through the Tuscan countryside reaching the hills surrounding Florence to enter a real Medieval castle, "Castello del Trebbio" which is immersed in an incredibly well preserved natural environment in the Chianti Rufina region. Built by the Pazzi family, an old noble Florentine family, it belongs nowadays to the Bai Mario family of winemakers. After a tour of the rooms and the cellars we will have a cooking lesson with the chef and learn how to prepare pasta dough and tomato sauce using fresh and local produce. Afterwards, we retire to the dining room to taste the hors d'oeuvres, pasta and sauce that we helped to prepare; all accompanied by the local wine. After lunch we return to our villa for an afternoon at leisure before meeting for our final dinner this evening. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 8 Pisa to London.** Check out after breakfast and transfer to Pisa for our scheduled flight to London. **(B)**



Tuscany

**PRICES PER PERSON**

Based on double occupancy

ROOM CATEGORY	2020	2021
Country Classic Room	£2895	£3095
Country Superior Room	£3095	£3295
Junior Suite	£3395	£3595
Country Classic Room for sole use	£3595	£3795

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights accommodation at Villa Il Poggiale • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine with included meals • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers • Taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

**NB:** Due to the layout of the villa, which is on multiple levels and does not have a lift, we do not recommend this holiday for those with walking difficulties as there are many stairs involved in accessing the rooms, courtyard and reception area. In addition, some of the excursions will involve extended periods of walking over uneven terrain.

## YOUR HOTEL – VILLA IL POGGIALE



Villa il Poggiale is a manor house hotel located in the heart of Tuscany, near San Casciano in Val di Pesa. Originally built in the 15th century, this Renaissance villa is listed as a 'Historical Residence' of Italy and has been tastefully restored by the current owners to provide all the modern comforts. The villa is surrounded by an estate of tall cypress trees which stand guard over the vineyards and olive groves, reminiscent of landscapes seen in Tuscan Renaissance paintings. It is the perfect base from which to explore the nearby lovely Tuscan cities and towns including Siena, San Gimignano and Florence and guests can enjoy either relaxing at the property or easy day trips to take in the art, history and culture of this famous region, known for its fine wines and olive oil. After a day exploring the surrounding area or simply relaxing at the villa you can take a dip in the pool or a drink in the rose garden before being treated to a candlelight dinner of local specialties in the restaurant.

### Your Accommodation

As the villa has been transformed from the original 15th century family home the rooms all differ slightly from one another. The bedrooms are painted with light colours made of soil and natural pigments, typical in Tuscany, whilst the awnings and bed fabrics come from small Tuscan artisan weaving factories. Each room offers a private bathroom, air-conditioning, mini-bar, telephone, tea and coffee making facilities, satellite television, safe deposit box and Wi-Fi. The Country Classic rooms range in size from 15 to 25 square metres and are located on the ground floor whilst the Superior Rooms are located on the higher floors and range in size from 20 to 30 square metres. The Junior Suites measure between 25 to 30 square metres and feature their own living room area.





La Tinaia Restaurant



Breakfast in the hotel garden



Swimming Pool

## Your Dining

The villa is open daily for breakfast, lunch and dinner and offers typical Tuscan cooking with Chianti specialties, all made from fresh, locally sourced ingredients. Meals can be taken in the indoor restaurant or, when weather permits, in the garden with views to the hills beyond. Start the day with a "Tuscan breakfast" consisting of sweet and savoury pastries, fresh ricotta, jams, honey, cold cuts from the nearby Chianti farms, and many other specialties. Lunch and dinner are served in La Tinaia Restaurant and consist of tasty buffets and served dishes made with organic and seasonal produce. The cuisine features traditional yet innovative dishes - starters of antipasti with meats, cheeses and vegetables are followed by freshly made pasta or meat dishes accompanied by freshly baked Tuscan breads and, of course, a selection of excellent Tuscan wines.

## Your Space

In the beautiful gardens you will find the swimming pool, with sun loungers and umbrellas to enjoy either the sunshine or shade as you please. A shaded reprieve is also provided by the Renaissance portico and the central courtyard, both excellent places to relax with a book. An honesty bar is located in the main lounge if you wish to take a glass of wine to the gardens. There is also a wellness area with a sauna where a range of treatments, including massage, is available.



Lounge



Local produce from Tuscany

# THE ROMANCE OF RAVELLO

A week on the Amalfi Coast staying at the incomparable Belmond Hotel Caruso with London Festival Opera

25<sup>th</sup> October to 1<sup>st</sup> November 2020

No matter where you travel in the world there are some places that will always stand out and make an indelible impression. High on the list for many is that slice of heaven known as the Amalfi Coast, surely one of the most beautiful stretches of coast to be found anywhere in the world. Perched on top of a mountainside with unrivalled views out to the Mediterranean sits the small town of Ravello, the jewel in the crown of the Amalfi Coast.

Ravello is the perfect spot to relax and enjoy the surrounding scenic and historical wonders. Our week long trip has been designed to include some of the best including the marvellous site of Herculaneum, the enchanting Palace of Caserta, Amalfi and the spectacular Naples Opera House. But, because we have chosen the Belmond Hotel Caruso, one of the world's finest hotels, it would be a travesty not to allow time to enjoy its many delights. So, a little less sightseeing than usual, allowing time to relax and explore the hotel, its romantic gardens, its infinity swimming pool which teeters on the edge of a cliff and the ancient palazzo, replete with original features, antique furniture and a marvellous collection of paintings. Time to wander slowly around Ravello with its stunning gardens, pretty houses, artisan boutiques and restaurants particularly at those quiet times in the early morning and evening when the day visitors have yet to arrive or have departed. Take the time to smell the scent of the lemon trees, enjoy the vistas and appreciate how lucky we are to enjoy these few days in such a paradise.

Making our visit even more special will be the performances by London Festival Opera who will perform on three occasions during the week including a special concert celebrating the life of the Great Caruso.

We hope you can join us and enjoy the amazing sea and landscapes of this magical corner of Italy along with wonderful music and La Dolce Vita in the way that only a truly great Italian hotel can command.



Amalfi Coast

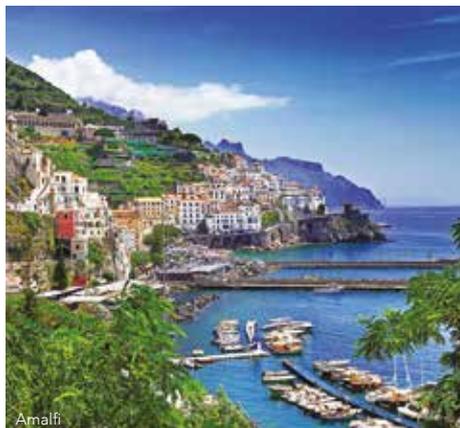


The stunning Italian Gardens of Belmond Hotel Caruso



## LONDON FESTIVAL OPERA

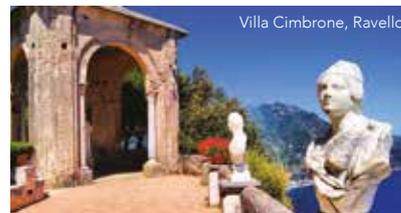
We are delighted that London Festival Opera will be joining us for our stay and their repertoire will include 'Caruso Celebration', a performance tracing the great singer's life through the operas he performed, including L'Elisir d'Amore, Rigoletto, La Bohème, Tosca and Pagliacci. Enrico Caruso, arguably the greatest tenor of all time, was born in Naples in 1873. Following his audition for Puccini in 1897 the composer is reputed to have asked 'Who sent you to me, God himself?' Caruso was the first recording star and sold more than a million records with his 1902 recording of 'Vesti la giubba'. He died in Naples in 1921 and is buried there in the Cimitero Monumentale di Poggioreale. The Belmond Hotel Caruso was originally an 11th century palace and was renamed in honour of the great tenor.



Amalfi



Fountain of Diana and Actaeon, Caserta



Villa Cimbrone, Ravello



Wall mosaic, Herculaneum

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Naples, Italy.** Fly by scheduled flight to Naples and transfer to the luxurious Belmond Hotel Caruso in Ravello for a seven night stay.

**Day 2 Ravello.** Enjoy a leisurely breakfast at the hotel with wonderful views of the Amalfi Coast. This afternoon there will be a guided walking tour through Ravello village to the nearby beautiful gardens of the Villa Cimbrone. Transformed in the early 20th century by Lord Grimthorpe and Vita Sackville-West, it is an essentially English style garden perched high above the sea offering "the most beautiful panorama in the world". The fabulous views from the delightful gardens are best admired from the Belvedere of Infinity, an awe-inspiring terrace lined with classical-style statues and busts. The villa was something of a bohemian retreat in its early days and has had many illustrious former guests including Greta Garbo, Virginia Woolf, Winston Churchill, DH Lawrence and Salvador Dalí. This evening we will enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel. **(B, D)**

**Day 3 Herculaneum.** Today we visit the remarkable ruins of Herculaneum at the foot of the awesome Mount Vesuvius. When Vesuvius erupted on 24 August AD 79, it engulfed the two flourishing Roman towns of Pompeii and Herculaneum, as well as the many wealthy villas in the area. Herculaneum is smaller but better preserved than Pompeii and has a wealth of archaeological finds such as inlaid marble floors, mosaics and paintings. While hot ashes consumed the wood of Pompeii structures, Herculaneum's destruction was due to a flood of hot mud which sealed and protected entire buildings. During our visit to the site we will discover ancient luxurious properties and villas. After our visit we will have lunch in a farmhouse overlooking the Sorrentine Peninsula before returning to Ravello in the afternoon and spending some time at leisure. **(B, L)**

**Day 4 Ravello.** This morning we take a boat trip on the traditional wooden boat Ercole, the perfect way to discover the hidden creeks and bays along the coast and the stunning scenery of the Amalfi Coast. In the afternoon we will meet at our hotel for our first concert by London Festival Opera – Caruso Celebration, a performance tracing the great singer's life through the operas he performed, including L'Elisir d'Amore, Rigoletto, La Bohème, Tosca and Pagliacci. After the concert we will take a short stroll to a local restaurant for a traditional Italian dinner. **(B, D)**

**Day 5 Royal Palace of Caserta & San Carlo Opera House, Naples.** Today we head north from Ravello to the Royal Palace in Caserta which was intended to rival Versailles. We will take a detailed visit of the palace with its marble steps and rooms, a master work of Vanvitelli, which was erected by the Bourbon kings in the 1700's and is one of the most colossal edifices in Italy. There are artefacts galore to be seen, gilded panelling, paintings, canopied royal beds, chandeliers, inlaid furniture and silk padded walls. A grand royal park with cascades and ornate fountains surrounds the palace. Later we will drive to Naples. Lunch will be followed by a guided tour of the spectacular San Carlo Opera House. Founded in 1737, it is the oldest opera house in Italy and all of Europe. Illustrious composers such as J.C. Bach, Joseph Haydn, Gioachino Rossini, Gaetano Donizetti, Vincenzo Bellini, Giuseppe Verdi, Giacomo Puccini and many more have all graced the theatre with their immortal music. After some free time in the main square we will return to Ravello for an evening at leisure. **(B, L)**

**Day 6 Amalfi.** Morning at leisure to relax. This afternoon we will take a scenic drive along the beautiful Italian Riviera to Amalfi. The narrow road winds along the side of rocky cliffs overlooking the sea, each twist and turn offers new and breathtaking views. During our visit we will have some free time to stroll along the impressive marina of Amalfi, one of the oldest maritime republics of Italy and discover the picturesque shops and cafes grouped around an old fountain in the heart of the village. The highlight will be our visit to the impressive Duomo, the Cathedral of St. Andrew, a mixture of Moorish and early gothic influences. It is the religious, historic and cultural heart of Amalfi and its role in the daily life of the Amalfitans is just as important now as it has been for centuries. The Cathedral is home to the relics of Sant'Andrea, or St. Andrew, who is the patron saint and protector of Amalfi. Adjoining the Cathedral is the Basilica of the Crucifix dating back to 596 AD where London Festival Opera will serenade us with a Neapolitan Soiree in a programme of popular Italian songs and arias. We will enjoy dinner at a nearby restaurant before returning to Ravello. **(B, D)**

**Day 7 Ravello.** A full day at leisure to enjoy the wonderful facilities at your hotel or explore Ravello further. This evening we will meet for our farewell concert by London Festival Opera in period costume at our hotel. A Gala Romantica – with celebrated romantic arias and ensembles from the operas of Vivaldi, Mozart, Rossini, Verdi and Puccini. The performance will be followed by our farewell dinner. **(B, D)**

**Day 8 Naples to London.** Transfer to Naples airport for your return scheduled flight to London. **(B)**

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

#### ROOM CATEGORY

Double Room with Village or Garden View	£3995
Double Room Deluxe with Sea View & Balcony or Terrace	£4295
Junior Suite Superior with Sea View	£4895
Junior Suite Deluxe with Sea View & Balcony or Terrace	£5595
Double Room with Village or Garden View for sole use	£4895
Double Room Deluxe with Sea View & Balcony or Terrace for sole use	£5395

**Group Size:** During the excursions for this escorted tour we restrict group size per guide to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel! • Seven nights accommodation at the Belmond Hotel Caruso • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine with included meals • Excursions • Three music performances by London Festival Opera • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

## YOUR HOTEL – BELMOND HOTEL CARUSO

Perfectly situated above the picturesque town of Ravello, the Belmond Hotel Caruso is steeped in history and offers uninterrupted views of the Amalfi Coast. A former 11th century palace, the hotel is a triumph of the restorer's skill. Its ancient walls and fresco-covered ceilings have been carefully preserved to make it a work of art in itself.



### Your Accommodation

Belmond Hotel Caruso offers 50 air-conditioned rooms and suites, all very spacious and each with its own unique style. The furniture reflects Neapolitan style and tradition; some rooms also feature antique 18th and 19th century pieces. There is 24-hour room service and all rooms feature satellite television, in-room safes, complimentary Wi-Fi access, mini-bar, tea and coffee making facilities, bathrobes, slippers and luxury bathroom amenities.

**Double Room with Village or Garden View:** Comfortable and spacious at 35m<sup>2</sup>, these rooms offer a delightful village or garden view. Bathrooms are large featuring separate shower cubicle and bathtub. The king-size bed can be changed for two single beds on request.

**Double Room Deluxe with Sea View and Balcony or Terrace:** Full of light, spacious at 35m<sup>2</sup> and beautifully decorated, they afford a spectacular sea view and a terrace or balcony and king size bed (two single beds on request). They have exquisite marble bathrooms with separate shower.

**Junior Suite Superior:** Charming, elegantly furnished and spacious at 45m<sup>2</sup>, Junior Suites offer a beautiful sea view (no balcony). Bathrooms are large and feature separate shower cubicle and bathtub with a king size bed (two single beds available on request).

**Junior Suite Deluxe with Balcony or Terrace:** These Junior Suites measure 55m<sup>2</sup> and command a breathtaking view of the sea and the coast below from either balcony or terraces and equipped with sun-beds, table and chairs. Bathrooms are large and feature separate shower cubicle, bathtub, bidet and beautifully furnished double vanity basins.



### Your Space

The hotel's Belvedere gardens are a heavenly terraced retreat featuring typical Mediterranean plants such as lemon and orange trees, an olive terrace, jasmine flowers, vines and strawberry trees. A full range of spa and fitness facilities are offered at the Wellness Centre and swimming in the spectacular heated infinity pool is like being suspended between sea and sky. The two elegant restaurants Caruso and Belvedere both offer traditional Neapolitan cuisine and regional Italian dishes, incorporating fresh ingredients from the herb garden and vegetable plot. The al fresco restaurant Belvedere, surrounded by the hotel's gardens, is a splendid setting and the Poolside Bar offers buffet-style appetisers, brick oven pizza, pasta and salad bar. Atmospherically lit with magnificent frescoes from the 18th century and awe-inspiring views of the Amalfi Coast, the Cocktail and Piano Bar offers an extensive list of innovative cocktails, a wide range of wines, champagnes and the delicious local Prosecco.





# CYPRIT TRESURES

An escorted tour discovering the ancient sites of southern Cyprus

2<sup>nd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> November 2020 & 22<sup>nd</sup> to 29<sup>th</sup> March 2021



Dotted with ancient ruins, Medieval castles, Byzantine churches and monasteries, Cyprus is a land steeped in ancient mythology with a fascinating history and compelling culture and lifestyle. The island also enjoys glorious sunshine for much of the year and a coastline teeming with endless stretches of white-sand beaches, secluded bays and rocky coves, all surrounded by the crystal-clear waters of the Mediterranean Sea. For our exploration of some of the island's most fascinating sites we have chosen to stay in the Bay of Limassol on the south coast with its beautiful beaches. From here we will visit Paphos with its array of extraordinary archaeological sites such as the UNESCO World Heritage Site, the Tombs of the Kings, which are unique in Cyprus being heavily influenced by ancient Egyptian tradition and the House of Dionysos with its fabulously preserved mosaics which date back to the 2nd century AD. Close by there are also pine-clad mountain villages with their simple stone Byzantine churches featuring Medieval icons and the city of Nicosia, all of which we will discover during our guided excursions.

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Larnaca, Cyprus.** Fly by scheduled flight. Drive to the Mediterranean Beach Hotel in Limassol for a seven night stay. (D)

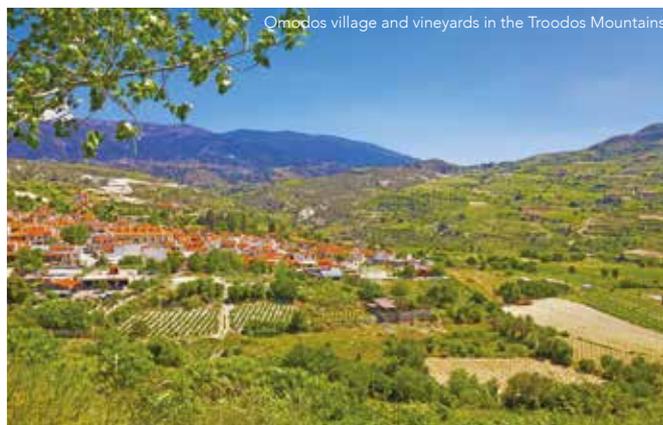
**Day 2 Limassol.** Our first stop this morning is the Temple of Apollo, one of the main religious centres of ancient Cyprus, where Apollo was worshipped as God of the Woodlands. It seems that the worship of Apollo on this site began as early as the 8th century BC and continued until the 4th century AD. We will continue to the ruins of Kourion, a city built in 1200 BC. Of particular interest are the public baths, the necropolis, the Fountain House, House of Gladiators and House of Achilles. The most spectacular site at Kourion is the Greco-Roman Theatre that has been completely restored and is used today for open air musical and theatrical performances. We will also visit Kolossi Castle, which was built in the 15th century on the ruins of a former fortress dated to the beginning of the 13th century. Some of these ruins can still be seen east of the present castle. This afternoon we will pass through the wine growing region around Limassol and through the fragrant citrus plantations to the old centre of Limassol for lunch and some free time before we visit Limassol Fort, just

above the old harbour. According to tradition, this is where Richard the Lionheart married Berengaria of Navarre and crowned her Queen of England in 1191. The fortified walls are of considerable archaeological interest and thought to be fragments of a much larger castle. (B, L, D)

**Day 3 Troodos Mountain Villages.** After breakfast, we will explore the Troodos Mountains. We head to the south west part of Troodos, where the delightful wine villages are located. We visit the most picturesque village, Omodos, followed by a visit to a local winery where we will have the chance to taste the wine and other products produced on the estate. We will continue to Troodos Square, which is situated 1800 metres above sea level, and on to the 11th century church of Saint Nicholas of the Roof which in 1985 was inscribed on the UNESCO World Heritage list alongside nine other painted Byzantine churches of the Troodos range. It is completely painted with murals dating from the 11th to the 17th centuries and is considered one of the most interesting Byzantine churches on the island. The church took its name from the steep, pitched timber roof that was built to protect it from the weather.



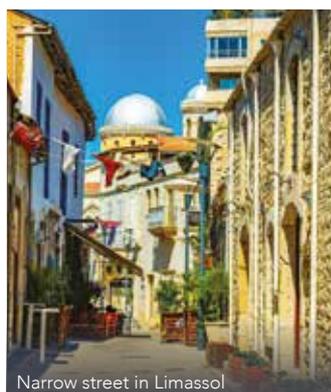
Aphrodite's Rock



Omodos village and vineyards in the Troodos Mountains



Tombs of the Kings, Paphos



Narrow street in Limassol



Mosaic floor, Paphos

Close by is the beautifully cool and green village of Kakopetria where huge plane trees line the streets, squares and the banks of the river. Here we have a traditional lunch followed by a walk in the old part of the village. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 4 Limassol.** Spend the day at leisure to enjoy the facilities of the hotel or take the local bus into Limassol town centre. Alternately, a short walk from the hotel will take you to the impressive remains of the archaeological site of Amathus, one of the ancient royal cities of Cyprus until about 300 BC. **(B, D)**

**Day 5 Paphos.** We will depart for our guided excursion after breakfast and make a brief stop at the most famous landmark in Cyprus - Aphrodite's Rock, the birthplace of the Goddess of Love and Beauty. We continue to Saint Neophytos Monastery founded by the Cypriot hermit and writer Neophytos. It is built in what used to be a secluded location at the head of a picturesque valley. The Egkleistra, an enclosure carved out of the mountain by the hermit at the end of the 12th century, contains some of the finest Byzantine frescoes from the 12th to the 15th centuries. The later monastery church contains some of the best examples of post Byzantine icons of the 16th century. Then on to Paphos where we will visit the 13th century Chrysopolitissa Church which is shared by the Anglican and Catholic congregation, who hold regular services at the invitation of the local Orthodox priest. Saint Paul visited Paphos in 45 AD in an attempt to convert the ruler of the time to Christianity. He was successful in his efforts, but not before being tied and whipped to an otherwise unremarkable lump of stone, the Pillar of Saint Paul which we will see during our visit. It is one of several popular stops for pilgrims who come to see the religious sites of this early bastion of the Christian faith. After lunch and some free time in the picturesque fishing harbour of Paphos, we continue to the archaeological park, which includes the House of Dionysos with the fabulously preserved mosaics which date back to the 2nd century AD. The name House of Dionysos is mainly due to the many representations of Dionysos, the God of wine. Our final stop in Paphos is at the Tombs of the Kings. Spread over a vast area, these impressive underground tombs date back to the 4th century BC and are carved out of solid rock while some are decorated with Doric pillars. High officials rather than Kings were buried here, but the magnificence of the tombs gave the locality its name. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 6 Nicosia.** Today we visit Nicosia, the only divided city left in the world today, part of the city is under Turkish occupation. We begin the day with a visit to a handicraft centre where we can see the traditional skills still performed, and then continue to the 'Green Line' which divides the city. We will have a panoramic view of the capital passing in front of the Venetian Walls, the Famagusta Gate, the Statue of Liberty and finally we will stop in front of the Archbishop's Palace. We will visit Saint John's Cathedral which was built in 1662 and is the only church in Nicosia in which the internal wall paintings have survived in their entirety. Then on to the Byzantine Museum, to admire its remarkable collection of icons dating from the 9th through to the 19th centuries and salvaged from all over Cyprus. The tour continues towards the newly restored 'Laiki Gitonia', an example of an old Cypriot neighbourhood, where we will have time for shopping (folk art, jewels, pottery). After lunch we visit the Cyprus Archaeological Museum, founded in 1882 it is the oldest and largest archaeological museum in Cyprus. The museum houses artefacts discovered during numerous excavations on the island. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 7 Limassol.** Enjoy a day at leisure. This evening we will enjoy a farewell dinner in a local taverna. **(B, D)**

**Day 8 Larnaca to London.** Transfer to the airport for the return scheduled flight to London. **(B)**

**PRICES PER PERSON**

Based on double occupancy

	2020	2021
Twin	£1795	£1895
Single	£2195	£2295

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights accommodation at the Mediterranean Beach Hotel • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine with dinners • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

## YOUR HOTEL – THE MEDITERRANEAN BEACH HOTEL

The base for our week-long exploration of southern Cyprus is the Mediterranean Beach Hotel, a four-star resort situated on the southwest of the Bay of Limassol. Set away from the bustle of Limassol's centre, and close to the archaeological site of the kingdom of Amathus, the hotel's unrivalled setting provides spectacular views of the island's southern coastline and access to one of the most beautiful sandy beaches of Limassol. The property features 292 rooms, many of which benefit from magnificent sea views.



The Terraced Gardens and split-level Swimming Pool



Outdoor Pool



Hotel Grounds



Blue Bar

### Your Room

The hotel has recently been renovated and all of the guest rooms have been carefully designed using materials and soft furnishings in warm earthy colours to reflect the nature and spirit of the Mediterranean Sea. During your stay you will be accommodated in the comfortable Deluxe Seaview Rooms which offer 25 square metres of space, en-suite bathroom with bathtub and hand shower, a balcony or terrace and sea views. The room amenities include central air-conditioning/heating, direct dial telephone, radio, safe deposit box, mini bar, tea and coffee making facilities and flat screen LCD-TV. There is a choice of twin or double bed configuration. There is complimentary WiFi in the room as well as throughout the hotel.



Deluxe Seaview Room

### Your Space & Dining

The hotel commands glorious sea views and incorporates a spectacular split-level swimming pool and terraced gardens that lead to the sandy, Blue Flag beach. There is also an indoor pool (heated during the winter months), a multi-level outdoor pool and a fitness centre and spa. The hotel offers a choice of restaurants and bars. The Acquaria Restaurant serves a sumptuous buffet breakfast with sea views whilst the included evening meals are served in the stylish Celeste Restaurant. During the summer months the restaurant opens onto the Celeste Terrace which overlooks the hotel's gardens, cascading pools and the sea and from where you can enjoy a cocktail whilst admiring the breathtaking views.



Celeste Restaurant Terrace

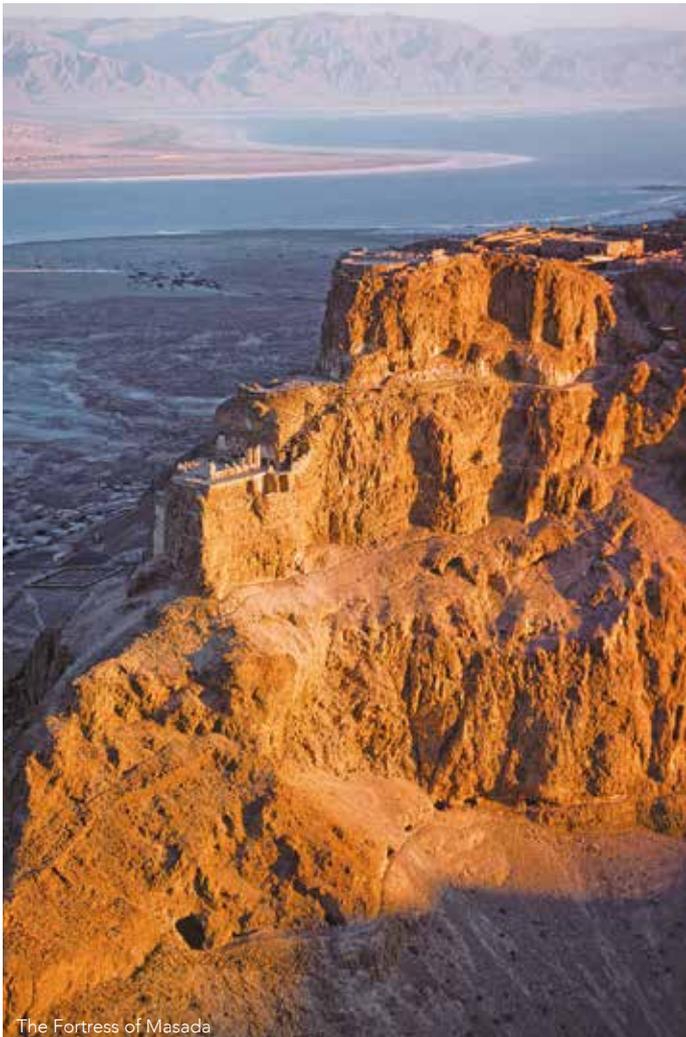


# CLASSIC ISRAEL

A luxury escorted tour of the Holy Land

5<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> November 2020 & 15<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> April 2021

A journey to Jerusalem and the Holy Land allows you to explore an extraordinary collection of both classical and Biblical sites, unequalled anywhere else in the world. Here the layers of architectural and archaeological heritage come to life from the Canaanites, Egyptians, Assyrians and Babylonians to the Romans, Crusaders and Ottomans. A plethora of famous landmarks await from the palaces of Herod the Great to the pastoral landscapes of Northern Israel, the old city of Jerusalem with its divisions of Christian, Jewish, Armenian and Muslim quarters to modern day world-class museums. Then of course there is another dimension to any trip to the Holy Land that is the faith that has brought believers to this historic land. Walking along Jerusalem's Via Dolorosa, or approaching the Dome of the Rock or Wailing Wall, the beliefs of those on pilgrimages or simply travellers with a thirst for knowledge and a spiritual predisposition means that the very sites take on great significance. No matter what your faith and beliefs, this land of antiquity offers an insight into a past and the greatest stories that have influenced the course of Western civilisation.



The Fortress of Masada



Holocaust Memorial at Yad Vashem



Waterfall, Banias Nature Reserve



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Tel Aviv, Israel.** Fly by scheduled flight to Tel Aviv. On arrival transfer into the city and check in to the Carlton Tel Aviv for a two night stay. Enjoy a welcome dinner at your hotel this evening. **(D)**

**Day 2 Jaffa & Tel Aviv.** Enjoy a morning tour to Jaffa, the ancient port city from which Tel Aviv developed. Famous for its association with the biblical stories of Jonah, Solomon and St Peter, it has a fascinating history stretching back over four thousand years. We will explore the highlights including the Clock Tour, Flea Market and the renovated alleys and buildings of the fascinating city. Returning to the hotel, the afternoon and evening are at leisure, allowing you to explore Tel Aviv independently. **(B, D)**

**Day 3 Haifa, Acre & Galilee.** Leaving Tel Aviv this morning we head along the coast to Caesarea, a city dedicated to Caesar Augustus by Herod more than 2000 years ago. Explore the archaeological excavations including Herod's Palace, the theatre, hippodrome and the famous Amphitheatre. Continue on to Haifa, Israel's third city and a major seaport, where we drive up Mount Carmel for a breathtaking view over the bay from the top of the city's famous Bahai Gardens. Following lunch, we will visit the Crusader Fortress in Acre before transferring to Galilee to check in to the Setai Galilee for a two night stay. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 4 Upper Galilee & Banias.** This morning we head for the Upper Galilee, where we can see the remains of the Syrian fortifications from 1967's Six Day War, and the present day villages of the area's Druze communities. We will visit Banias Nature Reserve, home of the source of the River Jordan before continuing on to the Hula Valley, one of Israel's most beautiful regions and a major bird migration centre. Every spring and autumn an estimated 500 million birds pass through on their journeys between Africa, Asia and Europe. After lunch in a local restaurant return to the hotel to enjoy the facilities and beautiful surroundings. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 5 Nazareth & Beit Shean.** After checking out of the hotel we drive to Nazareth, the childhood home of Jesus. Called the City of Annunciation, Nazareth is revered as the spot where the Angel Gabriel appeared before Mary to tell her she was to bear the Son of God. Enjoy panoramic views of the city and visit the Church of the Annunciation, which is built where Mary is said to have lived. Leaving Nazareth we travel on to Beit Shean to visit the excavations of this beautiful Roman City. Arrive in Jerusalem in the early evening and check in at the Orient Hotel for a five night stay. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 6 Masada & the Dead Sea.** Depart this morning on a full day excursion to the UNESCO World Heritage Site of Masada and the Dead Sea. Visit the Masada Fortress, located a little to the north of ancient Sodom. The mountain fortress of Masada looms high above the Dead Sea's desolate landscape and is often described as the most spectacular archaeological site in Israel. It was here that King Herod built a luxurious refuge complete with magnificent palaces, swimming pools and excavated rock cisterns to provide water supplies. Around 73 AD, after a prolonged Roman siege, over 950 members of the Jewish faith took their own lives rather than risk the faith of retaliation and a future of slavery. We will enjoy a cable car ride to the top of the summit for a walk around the site of this heroic last stand. Among the

fascinating sights you will see are the casement wall, the bath house, the magnificent three-tiered Northern Palace, the synagogue, the Western Palace, the Roman ramp and siege camps. Following lunch we transfer to the shores of the Dead Sea, the lowest point on earth, where you have the opportunity to take an "unsinkable" dip in its salty waters. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 7 Jerusalem (New City).** We will learn about the region's more modern history today during our tour of 'New Jerusalem'. We will spend the morning at the World Holocaust Remembrance Centre at Yad Vashem before visiting the Israel Museum and the open-air market of Mahane Yehuda. The late afternoon and evening will be at leisure for you to explore independently. **(B, D)**

**Day 8 Old Jerusalem & Bethlehem.** This morning we will visit the Mount of Olives from where we can enjoy spectacular views over the 'Golden City' of Jerusalem. Follow in the footsteps of Jesus as you walk through the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus spent the last moments before his arrest. See the place where early Christians held gatherings before the first church was built around 380 AD. Next, we will drive to Bethlehem and visit the Church of the Nativity, built over the Grotto where, according to tradition, Mary gave birth to Jesus. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant before returning to Jerusalem and taking a walking tour of the Old City from Jaffa Gate to the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. Following his official recognition of Christianity, Emperor Constantine constructed a vast sanctuary, built on what he believed was the site of Christ's resurrection. Continue your walk through the Christian Quarter to the bazaar, passing the Roman Cardo in the Jewish Quarter and the Western (or Wailing) Wall. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 9 Jerusalem.** Enjoy a day at leisure to further explore Jerusalem independently. **(B, D)**

**Day 10 Jerusalem to London.** Following a leisurely morning at the hotel, check out and transfer to Tel Aviv. Stop at a local restaurant for a light lunch before continuing to the airport for your return scheduled flight to London. Arrive this evening. **(B, L)**

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

	2020	2021
Twin	£4995	£5195
Single	£6495	£6695

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Nine nights hotel accommodation • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

## YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour of Israel we have selected some of the finest accommodation available and will be staying at the following five-star properties:

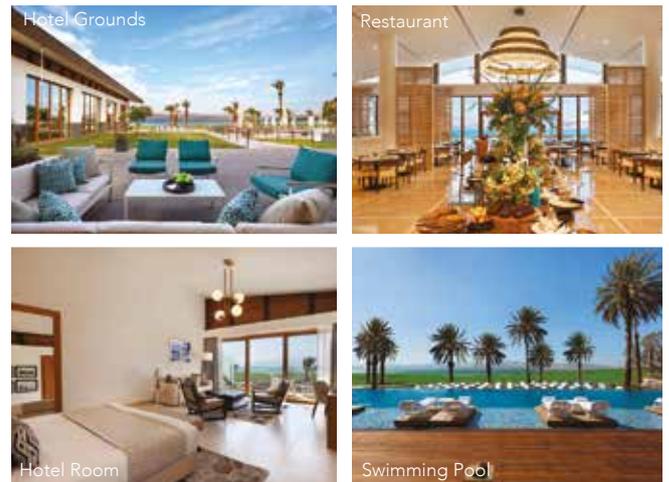
### Carlton Tel Aviv

Located on the seafront overlooking the city's marina, the Carlton Tel Aviv is the ideal base for our stay in Israel's second city. Simply cross the road to enjoy the great beaches and soft sands of the Mediterranean or take a stroll to discover Independence Park a short distance away. The hotel's central location means that a wealth of shopping and dining options can also be found nearby. All rooms are air-conditioned with private bathrooms, minibar, safe, satellite TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, tea and coffee making facilities, hairdryer and telephone.



### Setai Sea of Galilee

In a fantastic location right on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, the Setai is the ideal starting point for us to explore the north of Israel and discover the region's famous historic and cultural sights. The rooms overlook the glistening waters, with views to the distant Golan Heights and the ancient town of Tiberius. All of the rooms at this upscale property are air-conditioned and feature a private outdoor hot tub, bathroom, coffee machine, mini-bar, telephone, safe-deposit box, satellite TV and hairdryer. The hotel also offers complimentary use of bicycles.



### Orient Jerusalem

Located in the heart of the city's German Colony this recently opened hotel is within close walking distance of the First Station, Liberty Bell Park, and the historic Mishkenot Sha'ananim district, as well as many charming boutiques and bistros. The hotel and residence features 240 luxurious rooms and suites spread throughout the main building as well as a collection of breathtaking Templar-style buildings typical of the neighborhood's architecture. Our spacious Orient Rooms come with a balcony, complimentary Wi-Fi, satellite TV, minibar, safe and hairdryer.





# GLORIES OF ST PETERSBURG

An escorted visit exploring the wonders of St Petersburg staying at the Belmond Grand Hotel Europe

8<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> November 2020, 10<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> January & 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> February 2021

Here is a wonderful opportunity to see the glories of St Petersburg on a visit hosted by Julia Korn who is resident in the city. These exclusive trips will be a first-class introduction to the most romantically beautiful of all Russian cities. Making this visit extra special is the opportunity to stay in the iconic Belmond Grand Hotel Europe, a hotel that has long attracted the city's most distinguished guests.

St Petersburg is a destination which can be appreciated throughout the year but the winter months are magical and wonderfully atmospheric. Seeing the city under a mantle of freshly fallen snow is enchanting and during our winter visits we can explore without the summer tourists. "A riddle wrapped in a mystery inside an enigma" was how Winston Churchill described Russia, and today this still holds true. Its politics may have changed, but it still remains a mystery and consequently a marvellous place to visit.

Our group size is limited to a maximum of 25 guests per departure and Julia will be looking after all your sightseeing, theatre and dining arrangements. Being part of such a small party you will be able to take full advantage of our host's in-depth knowledge of her home city and because of the central location you will be able to walk to many of the most notable sights such as the Hermitage, Russian Museum, Palace Square, St Isaac's Cathedral and the Nevsky Prospekt. Our stay will also include a number of visits to historic palaces, both within the city and in the surrounding countryside.

## Travelling with you – Julia Korn



Julia Korn is a native of St Petersburg and has lived there all her life. She graduated from the Philological Department, St. Petersburg University, specialising in Russian Literature and History. In 1988-2016 she worked as a Senior Researcher at the National Pushkin Museum in St. Petersburg and published articles on

Russian literature, history and the arts. Fluent in English, she has travelled to the U.S.A many times and in 1999 helped coordinate the renowned International Pushkin Conference at Stanford University, California. In 1997-2004, Julia was engaged as a Director for the Stars of St. Petersburg Ballet Tours, presenting fully staged productions throughout the western states of the U.S.A regularly. In 2003, she qualified with an Art Management course from the Sibelius Academy, Helsinki. Well travelled herself, Julia has a keen insight into the special requirements of discerning travellers. She qualified in numerous courses and acquired all the licenses to conduct tours in all the major museums and palaces in and around St Petersburg providing services for guests with special interests in the arts, music, ballet, history and literature, both groups and individuals. Her achievements are numerous, and she has proved to be a popular host.



St Isaac's Cathedral



The Hermitage

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to St Petersburg, Russia.** Fly by scheduled flight. We arrive in the evening and transfer to the Belmond Grand Hotel Europe where we will spend five nights.

**Day 2 St Petersburg.** This morning meet after breakfast for an introductory tour of the city which will take us past many of the city's fine aristocratic buildings and palaces including the Peter & Paul Fortress, one of Russia's most famous historical fortresses, built in 1703. The day of its foundation is considered to be the birthday of the city. Soon after its construction the Fortress lost its military importance and for two hundred years served as a political prison. In the grounds of Peter & Paul Fortress we visit the Cathedral which is the burial place of the Romanov Dynasty. We will then visit the Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood. Work started on the church in 1883 at the site where Tsar Alexander II was assassinated two years earlier and it took a total of 24 years to complete. The exterior is fabulous, and the interior has been wonderfully restored with walls lined with mosaic icons and decorative ornamentations. The church has a distinctive golden onion dome and lovingly restored features, including the granite plaques displaying historic happenings from Alexander II's reign. From here we walk to the Russian Museum, the treasure house of Russian national art, including the Benois Wing named after the famous architect, Leon Benois, who designed it from 1910-1912. We will have lunch in the Mikhailovsky Restaurant in the Benois Wing followed by a



Peter & Paul Fortress



The Catherine Palace



Interior, Church of the Savior on Spilled Blood

museum tour. The museum boasts great Russian art, including the Socialist Realism works of the Stalin era, and countless masterpieces including 12th century icons and avant-garde paintings of the early 20th century. We walk back to our hotel through Arts Square for some time at leisure before we head out again for dinner at Tzar Restaurant. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 3 St Petersburg.** This morning we drive to the majestic St Isaacs' Cathedral, one of the world's largest and most opulent domed cathedrals. It took 40 years to construct, under French-born architect Auguste de Montferand's direction, from 1818 to 1858. The neoclassical exterior of St. Isaac's barely hints at the riotously rich interior, decorated with various sorts of marble, semi-precious stones and mosaics. Our next stop, Yusupov Palace, is one of the most beautiful private homes in St Petersburg which used to belong to the Yusupov family. We will see the restored State Rooms, some still with their original furniture, the exquisite Rococo private theatre and the cellars where the murder of Rasputin took place in December 1916 – the scene eerily recreated in wax. After lunch at Sadko we return to our hotel and enjoy an afternoon at leisure. In the early evening we plan to attend a performance at the Mariinsky Theatre (ballet or opera, schedule permitting). The Mariinsky Theatre was built in 1860 for Alexander II's wife Maria Alexandrovna. Known for many years as The Kirov, its Soviet Era name, the internationally renowned theatre has seen the rise of many Russian stars. Today, it is best known for its ballet and is one of Russia's leading opera houses. Snacks and drinks will be served during the interval. **(B, L)**

**Day 4 St Petersburg.** This morning we visit the Palace of Pavlovsk which originally belonged to Emperor Paul I and his wife Maria Fedorovna. Catherine the Great gave them the land and appointed her favourite architect Charles Cameron to start the construction of the Palace, to commemorate the birth of their son and heir Alexander I in 1777. At the end of the 18th century Pavlovsk Park was the largest landscaped area in the world. Johann Strauss made Pavlovsk an important musical centre when he was invited to participate at concerts there. We drive to Pushkin and the magnificent Catherine Palace. Outside the palace is the divine Catherine Park, comprised of two parts including the old garden and English Park, which was designed by master Dutch gardeners. Lunch will be taken at the Admiralty Restaurant in the Park. Catherine Palace has seen many changes during its time. Built in 1717 for Catherine I, it has been updated numerous times to reflect the personalities of each royal resident. Starting out as a summer pleasure palace, it now stands at around 325 metres across in a blaze of white, gold and blue. The interior houses numerous artworks exuding luxury and beautiful rooms including the Amber Room, justly regarded by some as the 'eighth wonder of the world'. It caused admiration throughout two centuries until it was looted by the Nazi soldiers during the Second World War. It has now been brought back to life and was unveiled in 2003 for the 300th birthday of St Petersburg. We return to the hotel and dinner tonight is at the Gogol Restaurant. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 5 St Petersburg.** Today we visit the incomparable Hermitage Museum which contains hundreds of thousands of works of art and is possibly the greatest in the world. We visit the State Rooms of the magnificent Winter Palace, home of the imperial family before the revolution, followed by the Old Masters. We then take a private tour of the Diamond Room which exhibits, amongst other valuable items, jewellery from the collections which belonged to members of the Imperial Romanov family and from St Petersburg's private collections; diplomatic gifts to the Russian Imperial

Court, works created by the Fabergé firm as well as ancient Greek and Scythian gold from excavations. We enjoy lunch at Hamlet & Jacks restaurant followed by a visit to the General Staff Building, one of the most famous architectural monuments in St Petersburg, designed by the architect K. I. Rossi and built between 1820 and 1830. The project revolved around the architect's idea to unite two separate buildings with a triumphal arch, a monument to Russia's victory in the war of 1812. The reconstruction of the General Staff Building was started in 2008 and ended in 2014. After the restoration the collections of Russian and European decorative art, paintings and sculptures from the 19th and 20th centuries (including Impressionist and Post-impressionist paintings, Matisse, and Picasso), as well as contemporary art were displayed in the building. The exhibition includes the renovated historical interiors of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the personal apartments of the Chancellor of State. We return to our hotel for some time to rest before we walk to the Katyusha Restaurant for our farewell dinner and folklore show. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 6 St Petersburg to London.** After breakfast and en-route to the airport we will take a private tour of the Fabergé Museum which was founded by the Link of Times Foundation in 2013 in order to repatriate lost cultural valuables to Russia. The collection contains more than 4,000 works of decorative applied and fine arts, including gold and silver items, paintings, porcelain and bronze. A highlight of the museum's collection is the group of nine Imperial Easter eggs created by Fabergé for the last two Russian Tsars. Continue to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. **(B)**

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Deluxe Double Room **£2395**

Deluxe Double Room for sole use **£2895**

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Five nights at the Belmond Grand Hotel Europe • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine with included meals • Excursions • Best available tickets for an opera or ballet performance at Mariinsky Theatre\* • Noble Caledonia Tour Leader • Gratuities • Transfers.

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

\* Details for the Mariinsky performance will be advised in your pre-departure information approximately 12 weeks prior to departure. The final order of the itinerary may vary to incorporate the performance.

**Important Visa Information:** A visa is required for Russia and Noble Caledonia will provide all supporting documentation needed although the process to apply for the visa cannot be started until three months before departure and in some instances can take up to six weeks. To obtain a Russian visa it will be necessary for passengers to attend application centres in London, Manchester or Edinburgh. This information is correct at the time of printing and should the information change, we will be in touch with booked passengers with updated guidelines.

# YOUR HOTEL – BELMOND GRAND HOTEL EUROPE

For our escorted tour of St Petersburg we will be staying at the magnificent Belmond Grand Hotel Europe, ideally located only moments away from some of the city's most prominent attractions like that of the Russian Museum, Mikhailovsky Theatre and the Church of the Saviour on Spilled Blood.



## Your Accommodation

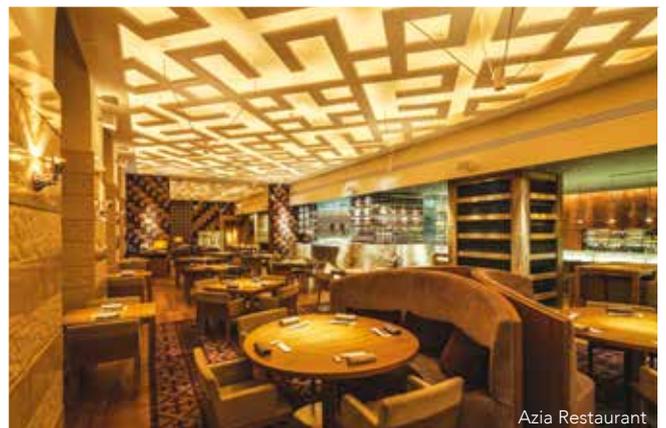
The hotel is comprised of 266 beautifully decorated rooms and suites which reflect the extravagance enjoyed by that of the Tsars. The rooms are spacious and have wonderful décor as well as including views overlooking Mikhailovskaya Street, the grand thoroughfare leading to Arts Square, and the Philharmonic Hall. Every room features air-conditioning, bathrobes, telephone, minibar, hairdryer, Wi-Fi, safe, writing desk and comfortable armchairs, cable TV and video/DVD player.

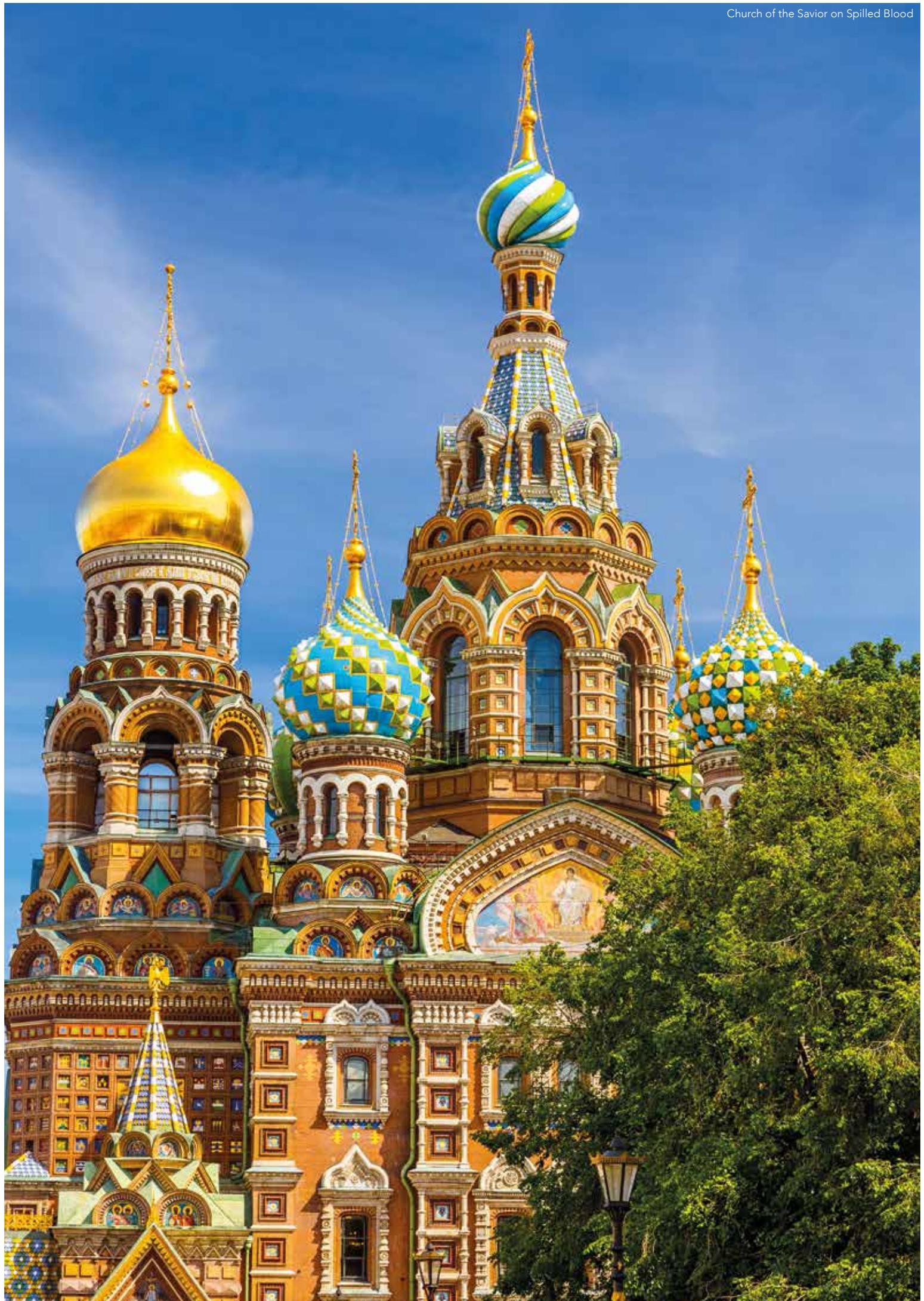
## Your Space

Lavishly furnished with soaring ceilings and stained-glass windows the Belmond Grand Hotel Europe has long attracted some of the city's most distinguished guests. The hotel creates its own sumptuous chocolates and pastries which are available at the onsite shop. There is also a fitness centre open 24 hours a day where you can enjoy the plunge pool, as well as CARITA Beauty Salon which provides a range of pampering services.

## Your Dining & Drinking

The hotel features five restaurants and bars serving an array of different cuisines. L'Europe Restaurant is one of Russia's most historic restaurants and offers Russian specialities such as the renowned Egg in Egg. There is also Azia Restaurant which specialises in pan-Asian dishes, a Mezzanine Café ideal for trying Russian afternoon tea and St Petersburg's only dedicated caviar bar. The Lobby Bar has beautiful stained-glass windows and hosts wonderful jazz and blues performances.





# JEWELS OF SRI LANKA

A luxury escorted tour discovering the wildlife & wonders of Sri Lanka

6<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> January; 27<sup>th</sup> January to 11<sup>th</sup> February & 17<sup>th</sup> February to 4<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Marco Polo described Sri Lanka as the finest island of its size in the world when he arrived there in 1265, while successive waves of Indian, Arab and European traders were seduced by reports of rare spices, precious stones and magnificent elephants. Although tiny in size compared to its neighbour India, Sri Lanka has a wealth of both ancient and natural sites which we will explore during this escorted tour including no less than five UNESCO World Heritage Sites in Galle, Kandy, Sigiriya, Polonnaruwa, and Dambulla. Over the course of two weeks we will take an in-depth look at this remarkable country with its diverse landscape of beautiful beaches, lush tea plantations, rolling hills and forests which are scattered with intricately carved stone monuments.

During our exploration we will learn about the country's cultural, colonial and religious history and visit some of its holiest temples and most scenic regions, most notably the verdant rolling hills of Hatton. Sri Lanka is also a paradise for wildlife lovers and we have included two full days game viewing including both Yala National Park, which offers the greatest diversity of animal and birdlife in the country and, further south, the lesser-visited coastal wetland area of Bundala National Park with its rich birdlife. In addition to the guided tours there will be some time at leisure to explore independently and our final days will be spent in the small coastal town of Koggala from where we will visit Galle, a wonderfully atmospheric city.

For our escorted tour we have selected six very special hotels in some beautiful locations including the iconic Galle Face Hotel in the heart of Colombo, the charming Water Garden Hotel with the Sigiriya Rock as a backdrop, the Argyle nestled among emerald green tea plantations in Hatton and the luxurious Chena Huts close to the Yala National Park. We end our tour with two nights at a luxury boutique beach resort on Sri Lanka's serene south, The Fortress Resort & Spa.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Colombo, Sri Lanka.** Fly by scheduled flight.

**Day 2 Colombo.** Arrive this morning and transfer to the Galle Face Hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is at leisure. (D)

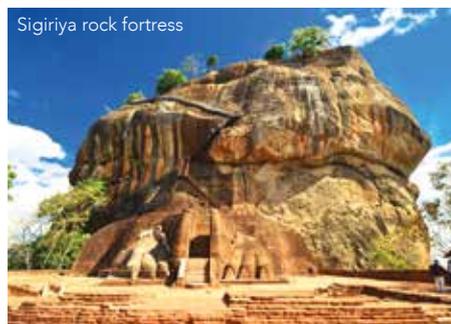
**Day 3 Colombo to Sigiriya.** Following a leisurely breakfast enjoy a panoramic tour of Colombo, the largest city in Sri Lanka and known in the past as the gateway to the Orient. The tour will showcase some of Colombo's most famous landmarks and buildings. Afterwards we make our way towards Sigiriya arriving in the late afternoon. Check in to our hotel, the tranquil Water Garden Sigiriya for a four night stay. Settle in this evening and enjoy dinner at the hotel. (B, D)

**Day 4 Polonnaruwa.** After breakfast we visit the ancient city of Polonnaruwa. This 5th century ancient city was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and is considered to be one of the best

planned archaeological sites in the country. The entire landscape of the region is punctuated by high man-made reservoirs, the most famous of which is Parakrama Samudra or the Sea of Parakrama, built during King Parakramabahu's reign in 1164-1196 AD. The monuments in the ancient city are relatively well preserved and highlights are the Royal Palace complex, including the King's Palace and Audience Hall and the spectacular Gal Vihare complex of four massive images of the Buddha cut from a single slab of granite, a highlight of ancient Sri Lankan rock carving. Return to Sigiriya and enjoy dinner in the hotel this evening. (B, D)

**Day 5 Dambulla & Habarana.** This morning we visit the Dambulla Cave Temples. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is a vast cave complex that dates back to the 1st century BC when it was converted into a temple and it is still regarded as one of the most important Buddhist monasteries. As we explore the complex of five caves, admire the rock ceiling which is the largest collection of paintings in Sri Lanka within a cave temple and wander between the 150 Buddhist statues that stand so well preserved within the cave walls. Later we will visit a traditional village in Habarana, in the Cultural Triangle of Sri Lanka, where we will have the opportunity to interact with local villagers and experience daily life and the scenic views of Hiriwadunna Lake. Here we will enjoy a typical Sri Lankan lunch in the village. (B, L, D)

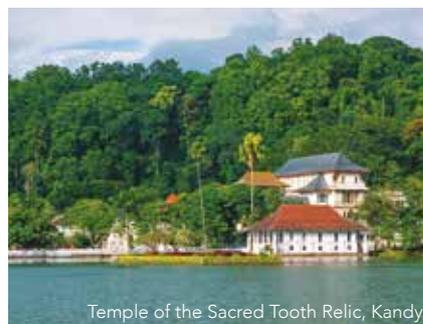
**Day 6 Sigiriya.** Easily the most iconic UNESCO World Heritage Site in Sri Lanka, Sigiriya Rock dramatically rises up out of the surrounding jungle, standing at nearly 200 metres tall. This incredible rock fortress was built by King Kashyapa I in the 5th century AD and served as a royal citadel for more than 18 years. King Kashyapa I spent his days in various sections of the citadel including the large bath pool which impressively lies atop this epic stone. We will arrive at the fortress in the morning and with every step we climb, marvel at its beauty in the sun, pausing occasionally during our ascent to admire the mirror wall, the great lion paws, and the famous Sigiriya frescoes, there were as many as 500 but now only 19 remain. Once at the top, enjoy the unparalleled views of the natural jungle that surrounds you. Return to the hotel and enjoy the remainder of the afternoon at leisure. (B, D)



Sigiriya rock fortress



Leopard, Yala National Park



Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic, Kandy

**Day 7 Kandy.** Enjoy a leisurely breakfast this morning before departing for the hill capital of Kandy, the last kingdom of Sri Lanka. En-route we visit Matale, a small town famed for its spice gardens, where you can smell, touch and taste the spices of the island that are known the world over and see how they are grown and processed. We will have lunch in the spice garden. Continue to the city of Kandy, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and home to the famed Temple of the Sacred Tooth Relic. This iconic monument was built during the 16th century AD and is one of the most important temples for Buddhists as it houses the Sacred Tooth Relic of Buddha and is one of the most revered sites in this cultural capital. Visit the Temple on arrival before checking in to the Cinnamon Citadel for a two night stay. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 8 Kandy.** This morning we visit the Royal Botanical Gardens. With 147 acres and over 4000 species of plants, it is the largest and most impressive botanical gardens in Sri Lanka. As we take a leisurely walk, admire the beautiful giant bamboo and double palm trees, both of which are imports to the island and many are over a century old, and the fine collection of orchids, for which the garden is famous. This afternoon we visit a local house in Kandy and enjoy a delicious afternoon tea. **(B, D)**

**Day 9 Kandy to Hatton.** After breakfast this morning we make our way to the heart of Sri Lankan hill country for our two night stay at The Argyle. This small luxurious hotel is nestled on a stunning elevation in Hatton offering extraordinary views of the surrounding natural landscape and a peaceful atmosphere. The region is home of the famous Ceylon tea and the rolling mountains are a carpet of velvety green tea plantations, interspersed with gushing streams and tumbling waterfalls. The salubrious climate and misty glens of the region make it a must on any Sri Lankan itinerary. As an alternative to our journey by road, we may board the train at Peradeniya Station and take a scenic train journey to Hatton and then transfer by road to our hotel. This ride by local train is one of the most picturesque railway journeys in the world. We pass through lush green tea estates and mist covered mountains as we journey along the winding tracks. *Please note that the Railway Authority will only issue tickets 10 days prior to our travel and we are only able to purchase them at that time. Due to limited seating, there is a possibility we may not be able to obtain tickets. Should this be the case we will travel by road. It is important to note that the train is air-conditioned but basic, however, the scenery en-route is magnificent.* **(B, D)**

**Day 10 Hatton.** After breakfast take a tour of a tea plantation where we will be given a demonstration of how Ceylon tea is produced from the plucking stage through to the finished product. Enjoy a relaxing afternoon at leisure. **(B, D)**

**Day 11 Yala.** After breakfast we head towards Yala, an ideal base for exploring the Yala National Park. Also known as Ruhunu, Yala National Park was designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1900 and is now home to 44 varieties of mammal and 215 bird species. This vast region of arid scrub interspersed with pockets of dense forest and open patches of grassland hosts one of the highest densities of leopard in the world. Arrive in the late afternoon and check in to Chena Huts, our base for the next three nights. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 12 Yala National Park.** We depart early morning for a Jeep safari in Yala National Park, one of Sri Lanka's oldest and largest national parks. Known for the variety of its wildlife, we hope to see sloth bears, jackals, wild boar, elephants and the elusive Sri Lankan leopard, all of which can

be found here. The park is known to have one of the highest density of leopards in a concentrated area. Return to the hotel for breakfast and enjoy some time at leisure before our second safari in the late afternoon. The best time to enter the park is in the early morning or late afternoon when the animals wake or resurface after taking cover from the midday sun. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 13 Bundala National Park.** This morning we explore Bundala National Park, a haven for birdwatchers and Sri Lanka's first declared Ramsar wetland. Located in the deep south of the island, the diversity of the park lies in its landscape, from dry thorny scrubland to sand dunes and salt marshes, to mangroves and lagoons. Take a jeep through the park and discover close to 200 species of bird as well as many species of butterfly and mammals. Return to the hotel to spend the remainder of the day at leisure. Alternatively take a final game drive in Yala National Park in the late afternoon. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 14 Galle.** Today we head towards Galle and arrive at our hotel in the coastal town of Koggala in the early afternoon. Check in to The Fortress Resort & Spa for a two night stay. In the late afternoon we embark on a walking tour of the impressive Galle Fortress. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is the port where the Portuguese first landed in Sri Lanka in the 16th century and was then extensively fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. Littered with high-end hotel properties, as well as bustling cafes, Galle Fort is a world of its own. **(B, D)**

**Day 15 Koggala.** Enjoy breakfast at the hotel and spend the full day at leisure to enjoy the hotel's facilities, relax on the beach or independently explore the historic city of Galle which is only a short drive away. Alternatively, join an optional whale watching tour that will be offered locally. **(B, D)**

**Day 16 Koggala to Colombo to London.** Transfer to the airport for the return scheduled direct flight to London. Arrive this evening. **(B)**

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin	£5595
Single	£8395

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 14 nights hotel accommodation as described • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Three Jeep Safaris at Yala National Park • One Jeep Safari at Bundala National Park • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Tours as described • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance, visa, drinks, optional whale watching tour.

**NB:** We have planned the itinerary to be less strenuous than most to the region, however, the tour will involve being on your feet for long periods and some long drives. Also, many of the sites are reached by uneven steps without handrails. To best enjoy your experiences in Sri Lanka, you should be in good physical condition.

# YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour of Sri Lanka we have selected some of the finest accommodation available and will be staying at the following properties:

South Lawn overlooking the sea

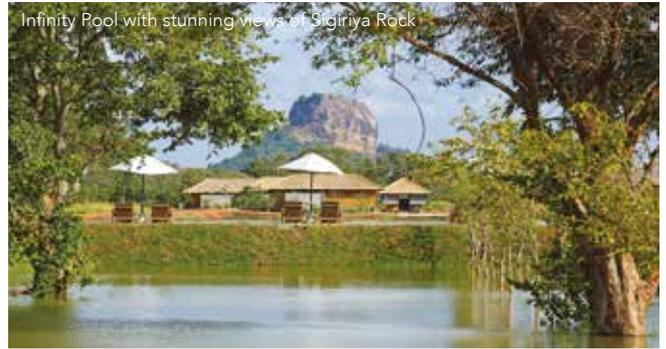


Superior Twin Room



Verandah Restaurant

Infinity Pool with stunning views of Sigiriya Rock



Deluxe Villa

Main Pavillion and Lounge



## Galle Face Hotel, Colombo – Overnight

Located on the seafont in the heart of Colombo, the Galle Face Hotel is an iconic landmark. Built in 1864, the hotel is rich in history and is a testimony to both Sri Lanka's colonial past and its independent present. All rooms and suites boast a nostalgic charm and a high level of comfort. They offer Wi-Fi, satellite LCD television, air conditioning, a safety deposit box, complimentary soft drink selection and various luxury amenities. The Verandah Restaurant is the perfect place to sit and enjoy views of the Indian Ocean whilst enjoying the local or international cuisine and, with a spa and long sea-facing outdoor swimming pool, the hotel makes the ideal first stop in Sri Lanka from which to rest and relax as well as explore Colombo's prominent sights.

## Water Garden Hotel, Sigiriya – Four nights

The Water Garden Hotel is a beautifully laid out, boutique hotel with stunning views of the ancient rock fortress of Sigiriya. The thoughtfully-landscaped grounds have been inspired by the water gardens of ancient fortresses, filled with pathways and mature trees, allowing you to enjoy the region's landscapes even when you have returned to the hotel. There are just 30 exceptionally appointed and spacious villas scattered throughout the gardens, all with luxurious interiors and in naturally beautiful settings. This wonderfully tranquil atmosphere extends to the main areas of the hotel where the iconic Sigiriya Rock sits as a backdrop to the hotel's infinity pool that overlooks the gardens. The main restaurant is traditional in style with high quality local produce offering local and international cuisine.

The hotel on the banks of the Mahaweli River



Lower Lounge and Pool



## Cinnamon Citadel, Kandy – Two nights

Influenced by the old and inspired by the new, Cinnamon Citadel has fused chic design with the rich heritage of this ancient kingdom to breathe new life into the most stylish hotel in the hills of Sri Lanka. The Cinnamon Citadel is an ideal retreat for those seeking the treasures of this ancient city and desiring rest and relaxation in a peaceful setting. The interiors take on a mix and match of heritage red, with mustards and crimson to highlight royalty and majesty for which Kandy is renowned. There is a restaurant, bar and café on-site and an outdoor swimming pool from where you can enjoy the breathtaking view of the Mahaweli River that flows along the periphery of the resort.

Deluxe Room



Outdoor Dining





The Hotel



Bruce Room - upper level



Bruce Room - lower level

## The Argyle, Hatton – Two nights

The Argyle is a luxurious hideaway nestled among the emerald green tea blankets of Sri Lanka's hill country. The hotel is spread across 3.1 acres in the city of Hatton with magnificent views of the iconic Adam's Peak in the distance. There are 38 uniquely styled, comfortable rooms and suites offering luxurious modern amenities and the most spectacular views. We will be staying in the beautifully appointed Bruce Rooms; the upper level rooms offer glorious sights of the surrounding hillside from a private balcony while the lower level rooms offer a terrace with access to the vast, enclosed garden and elevated swimming pool. The hotel features a restaurant, named Queen Mary's Dining Room, offering an extensive range of culinary delights and, when not exploring, the heated swimming pool is the perfect place to relax and unwind in the cool climate of Hatton.



Garden area & outdoor pool



Cabins set amongst the sand dunes



Master Bedroom



Cabin entrance and walkway



The colonial style Fortress Resort overlooking the Indian Ocean



Fortress Balcony Room



Local seafood delicacies

## Chena Huts, Yala – Three nights

Chena Huts is situated among the dunes and trees at the ocean's edge, close to the border of Yala National Park. At this distinctive property, the 'huts' are in fact luxurious, detached, private pavilions offering fine views of the surrounding wilderness. The 14 cabins, each with private plunge pool, are positioned throughout the property and linked by wooden pathways. They are designed to harmonize with the jungle environment, the subtle interiors hint towards a safari theme. During your stay morning and evening drives will be offered, accompanied by a knowledgeable local ranger/guide. Between safaris, enjoy the time to relax, perhaps lounge by the outdoor pool or on the private beach or retreat to your cabin to soak up the sounds of nature. Guests may enjoy fine dining at the Basses Restaurant and cocktails at the poolside bar.

## The Fortress Resort & Spa, Koggala – Two nights

The Fortress Resort & Spa echoes the city of Galle's charming architecture with immense gates, white-washed walls and an extensive courtyard. This luxurious getaway is set on the south coast of Sri Lanka near the beautiful historic city, an area blessed with paradise beaches and Dutch colonial architecture. The unique location of The Fortress means you are only a 30 minute drive from historic Galle whilst having the blissful beach of southern Sri Lanka at your feet. Every room is spacious and modern and comes with a private terrace or balcony. Relax by the pool and enjoy the views of the Indian Ocean beyond. With the choice of two restaurants and lounges offering a variety of quality food, local teas and cocktails, this is the perfect final stop and place to unwind.

# ETHIOPIA – THE CRADLE OF CIVILISATION

An escorted tour of the Northern Historical Route

19<sup>th</sup> February to 5<sup>th</sup> March & 21<sup>st</sup> November to 5<sup>th</sup> December 2021

Ethiopia offers the most ancient cultural heritage of all sub-Saharan Africa. With a recorded history which began in the 6th century BC with the dawning of the Axumite civilisation, there sprang a line of emperors who ruled with few interruptions until the death of Haile Selassie. During our twelve night tour we will travel the northern historical route and our visit will include their palaces in the old capital of Gondar and in Addis Ababa.

Christianity reached Ethiopia some 200 years before it arrived in Britain. On our visit to Lalibela we will see the amazing 12th century church, hewn from the rock. We will visit the island monasteries of Lake Tana and the spectacular Blue Nile waterfalls.

A highlight of the tour will be the visit to the Simien Mountains National Park, which has been declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. The region includes many summits above 4000 metres and culminates in the highest point in Ethiopia, Ras Dejen, at 4620 metres, the fourth highest mountain in Africa. The mountains are a must for all those interested in wildlife, scenery and spectacular landscapes.

Despite having more UNESCO World Heritage Sites than any other African country, tourism is still in its infancy in Ethiopia and, whilst the infrastructure is developing rapidly and we have selected the finest accommodations available, travellers should not expect the same facilities as that of Africa's top visited destinations. What you can expect, however, is a warm welcome and a unique and rewarding travel experience in a profoundly beautiful land.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.** Fly by scheduled overnight flight.

**Day 2 Addis Ababa.** On arrival meet our local agents and transfer to the Golden Tulip Hotel. Our accommodation will be booked from the previous day to allow for immediate check in. Addis Ababa was founded by Emperor Menelik II in 1887, who selected the site because of its location within the Entoto hills and today it is Africa's diplomatic capital with headquarters for the Organization of African Union and the United Nations Economic Commissions for Africa. Enjoy a day at leisure. (B, L, D)

**Day 3 Addis Ababa.** Spend the day in Ethiopia's capital city where we will visit the Trinity Cathedral, built to commemorate the country's liberation from Italian rule, the National Museum and the Ethnographic Museum which showcases Ethiopia's rich ethnic diversity. We will also drive out to the Entoto Mountain offering wonderful views over the city and the location of Menelik's former palace, which now contains a small museum, and the Entoto Mariam Church the site of his coronation in 1882. After lunch we will make our way to the city's market. The "Merkato", located in western Addis Ababa is the largest open-air market in Africa, offering an array of colours, aromas, costumes, produce and jewellery. After some free time to relax we will meet this evening for dinner. (B, L, D)

**Day 4 Addis Ababa to Bahir Dar.** After an early breakfast in the hotel we will transfer to the airport for our flight to Bahir Dar. On arrival, transfer to Kuriftu Resort & Spa, our base for the next two nights, before making our way to the Blue Nile Falls. Known locally as Tissiat, meaning "The Smoking Water", the falls are 328 feet wide and the water plunges some 150 feet, giving rise to picturesque stream clouds and rainbows. After lunch we will make our way to the local market where we find typical hand-woven capes and scarves before visiting the former palace of Emperor Haile Selassie at Bizeit, with great views of the town and located where the Blue Nile flows out of the lake. (B, L, D)

**Day 5 Bahir Dar.** Today we will take a boat ride on Lake Tana, the origin of the Blue Nile, to visit two of the renowned Island Monasteries of the Lake. Located on the bird rich, wooded Zege Peninsula, the 16th century Ura Kidane Mihret and Azua Mariam monasteries both have wonderful paintings

and murals which depict scenes from the Old and the New Testaments on their walls. Return to the hotel for lunch and a free afternoon to relax at the hotel before meeting for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 6 Simien Mountains National Park.** This morning we will drive to the Simien Mountains National Park, an area of highland in the northern part of Ethiopia consisting of some spectacular mountain scenery. The National Park covers 190 square kilometres and was added to the World Heritage Site list in 1978. It contains a variety of herbaceous plants, around 180 species of bird, 57 species of tree and a recorded 35 species of mammal including Walia ibex, Ethiopian wolf, Menelik's bushbuck and the Gelada baboon which are endemic. Arrive at the Limalimo Lodge for our two night stay and enjoy a free afternoon to enjoy the views or take some short walks near the property. (B, L, D)

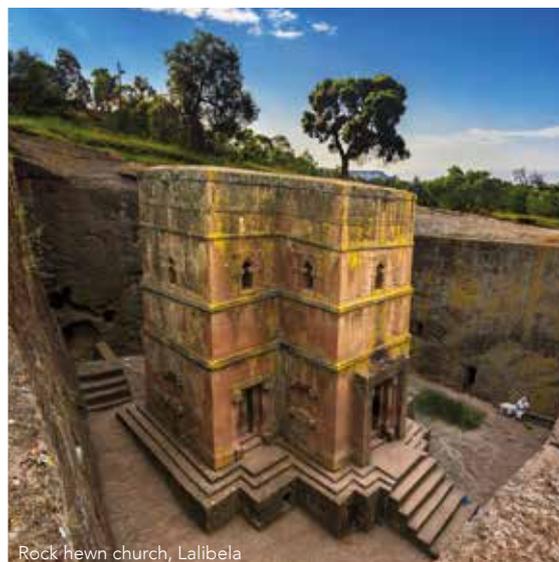
**Day 7 Simien Mountains National Park.** After breakfast we drive to Chenek, a spectacular site with impressive escarpment, super viewpoints and a variety of plant and animal species including the endemic Walia ibexes. On a series of walks we will take in the beautiful landscape and keep an eye out for Gelada baboons, also called bleeding-heart monkeys, and the lion monkeys. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Gondar.** We leave the mountains today and drive to Gondar, the imperial city where the kings of Ethiopia were based for two centuries. The city was the first capital of the Ethiopian empire, which began in 1632 with the reign of Fasilidas. After checking in to Mayleko Lodge for our overnight stay, we will take the chance to visit some of the sites built by the Gondarine kings including the Debre Birhan Trinity Church, with its magnificent murals, the 17th century castle of King Fasilidas and the Fasilidas pool in which pilgrims still take a plunge during the Timkat festival. (B, L, D)

**Day 9 Gondar to Lalibela.** This morning we transfer to the airport for our short flight to Lalibela and upon arrival transfer to Mezena Lodge, our base for the next two nights. The city is known as the "New Jerusalem", created by King Lalibela in the 12th century who built a number of rock-hewn churches which were considered an "eighth wonder of the world". Visit the churches of Bet Golgotha, Bet Mika-el, Bet Mariam, Bet Meskel, Bet



Gondar castle



Rock hewn church, Lalibela



Blue Nile Falls



Gelada baboon

Danaghel and Bet Medhane Alem, the largest, which is built like a Greek temple with three empty graves symbolically dug for the biblical patriarchs Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. (B, L, D)

**Day 10 Lalibela.** Today we will visit the second group of the rock churches. The south-east cluster of churches is more irregular in design than the north-western cluster. Several of the individual churches in this cluster are thought to have been secular in origin, and some predate the reign of King Lalibela by five centuries. The churches in the south-east cluster include Bet Gebriel-Rafael, Bet Abba Libanos, Bet Lehem, Bet Emanuel, and Bet Mercurios. According to legend, Bet Abba Libanos was built overnight by Lalibela's wife, Meskel Kebre, who was assisted by a group of angels. Finally visit Bet Giyorgis, possibly the most elegant and majestic of all the Lalibela churches, which lies somewhat isolated in the southwest part of the village on a sloping rock terrace. After lunch, we will visit the monastery of Nakuto Laab, a simple, yet fascinating example of Lalibela's eastern group of rock-hewn churches. Our day ends at the open market of Lalibela, where we experience Ethiopian hospitality at a traditional coffee ceremony. (B, L, D)

**Day 11 Axum.** Return to the airport this morning for our flight to Axum. In the second century BC it was one of the major trading centres of the region due to its proximity to the Red Sea and the ability to trade with Africa, Arabia and the Roman world. Today it is renowned for its Cathedral of St. Mary Zion, where legend has it the original Ark of the Covenant is housed. Also see the standing monolithic stelae, the great 4th century obelisks which are made of single pieces of granite and rise up to 33 metres in height. Our last call is at the Queen of Sheba's Palace – the site contains the remains of what was once a massive palace with finely mortared stonewalls, deep foundations and its own impressive drainage system and is believed to be the oldest building in Axum. Later this afternoon we transfer to the Sabeen International Hotel for our overnight stay. (B, L, D)

**Day 12 Gheralta.** After a free morning we visit the ruin of Yeha Temple. According to the 19th century German scholar Heinrich Miiller, the temple is thought to date back to 700 BC and is believed to be the oldest standing building in the country. Beside the remarkable temple, a church dedicated to Abba Aftse stands. Abba Aftse was one of the famous nine saints who came to Ethiopia in the 6th century from the east Roman Empire to teach the Gospel. After our visit we drive to Gheralta Lodge in Hawzien and check in for our two night stay. Dinner will be at the lodge this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 13 Gheralta.** After breakfast, we will visit Dugum Selassie, a church carved into granite outcrop inside the modern church of the same name in the village. Later this afternoon we visit Abraha Atsbeha. The church is supposed to have been constructed in the 4th century by the two kings Abreha and Atsbeha and one of the earliest of the rock churches of Tigray. The upper part of the wall and the ceilings were

painted and even though the paintings are fading we can still see the images of cherubim, angels and biblical scenes. (B, L, D)

**Day 14 Mekelle to Addis Ababa to London.** Today after breakfast we will drive to Mekelle. En-route, at the edge of the small town of Wukro on a knoll of red rock, is the rock-cut church of Wukro Cherqos. After our visit we continue to Mekelle airport for our flight to Addis Ababa. On arrival we will transfer to a local restaurant for our farewell dinner including local dancers before transferring to the airport for our scheduled flight to London. (B, L, D)

**Day 15 London.** Arrive this morning.

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin	£5195
Single	£6995

**Group Size:** We are restricting the group size to just 20 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights hotel accommodation • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Soft drinks and water with lunch & wine, beer & soft drinks with dinner • Excursions • Local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

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

**NB:** To best enjoy your experience in Ethiopia you should be in good physical condition and be able to walk considerable distances, to and around many ancient sites, over rough or uneven terrain and up to 100 uneven steps with no handrail. There will be opportunities for hikes of varied lengths and for most activities a moderate level of exertion is required. Some days may entail early starts and drives of up to six hours, however the vehicles used are modern and comfortable. Some of our tour will be at high altitude, for example Gondar at over 2500m and the Simian Mountains at over 4500m.

**Important Visa Information:** A visa is required for entry into Ethiopia. British citizen passport holders can obtain a single-entry e-Visa via Ethiopia's official government website: [www.evisa.gov.et](http://www.evisa.gov.et) at any time, but no later than three days before your arrival date. To obtain a visa passengers will need to provide a scanned copy of a recent passport-size photo and scanned copy of the passport information page (including the photo). The current visa fee is \$52 per person. This information is correct at the time of printing and should the information change, we will be in touch with booked passengers with updated guidelines.

# GALICIA'S CAMELLIA ROUTE

A week exploring the Gardens of Galicia with Rosemary Legrand

12<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> March 2021

Galicia boasts the perfect conditions for the cultivation of camellias and is currently home to nearly 8000 varieties of this beautiful and enigmatic flower. Thought to have been brought from the East by Portuguese sailors, they were originally planted in the gardens of the grand country mansions, known as 'pazos', which were built by noble families in the 17th and 18th centuries and are typical of this region. We have timed our visit to coincide with the spring sunshine of March when the camellias are in bloom providing a welcome splash of colour in shades of white, pink and red against the backdrop of this pretty and relatively unexplored corner of North West Spain.

Every pazo garden contains luxuriant specimens and during our week's visit we will explore some of the finest and most unique including the 54 hectare Pazo de Lourizan, with its botanical garden housing many notable species and the Baroque garden of Pazo de Oca, the "Galician Versailles" and a quintessential example of the Galician countryside home. There are also charming towns and architectural delights to be discovered along the way including Pontevedra, with its attractive old quarter and pretty squares, and of course Galicia's loveliest city and famous pilgrimage centre – Santiago de Compostela with its exuberant Baroque cathedral and Medieval centre.

This is a tour for camellia lovers and indeed all garden enthusiasts with visits included to the region's best gardens at the height of their season. Our programme will include comprehensive excursions as well as free time to relax from the comfort of the stunning, historic Paradors and appreciate the beautiful green scenery of Galicia. We will be joined by horticultural expert Rosemary Legrand, who will provide talks and briefings during the week and accompany us on excursions.



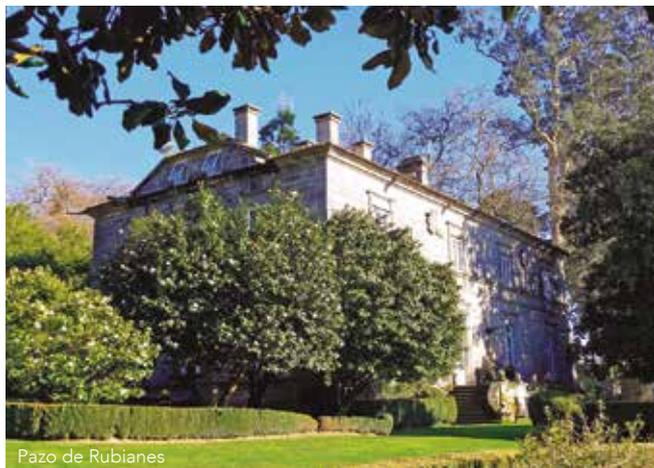
## Guest Speaker – Rosemary Legrand



Rosemary is a former nursery owner and daughter of the late George Hyde, who was a hybridist of azaleas and rhododendrons. Many of his award-winning hybrid plants can be seen at the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley, Surrey, the de Rothschild rhododendron gardens at Exbury, Hampshire, and the National Trust Gardens at Kingston

Lacy in Dorset. Rosemary had the honour of presenting HM The Queen with a collection of her late father's azaleas named after the Queen's former Head Gardener, Fred Nutbeam, at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1996. She has travelled extensively to gardens in many parts of the world and is an experienced public speaker. She is on the RHS Speakers Register and also speaks for NAFAS; she wrote a number of contributions for the book, '1001 Gardens you must see before you die' and an article for the Royal Horticultural Society 'Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia 2014 Year Book'.





## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London Gatwick to Porto, Portugal & Pontevedra, Spain.** Fly by scheduled flight from London Gatwick to Porto. Upon arrival we leave Portugal and drive north to Pontevedra and check in to the Parador de Pontevedra, a centrally located 16th century palace, for our three night stay. Enjoy dinner at the hotel this evening. **(D)**

**Day 2 Pazo de Saleta & Gardens of Castle Sotomayor, Pontevedra.** After breakfast we will drive to Pazo da Saleta. Here, we will find a five hectare English-style garden designed by landscape architect Brenda Colvin and see an octagonal dovecote surrounded by a forest of oaks, eucalyptus and cork oaks. The garden has many plants of exotic origin: rhododendrons, azaleas, members of the Australian sugarbush and myrtle families and South American heathers, along with many varieties of camellias with white, pink, red, purple, mottled and reticulated petals that fill the garden with colour to the beginning of spring. After lunch we visit the gardens of Castle of Sotomayor, which date back to the 12th century. The garden is home to 400 camellia plants of up to 25 different species, some of which are centuries old. Return to our hotel in the afternoon and take a walking tour of Pontevedra, an elegant old town which has been shaped by a rich maritime and trading past. Amongst the sights we will see is the Peregrina Chapel, the city's most emblematic building. This Baroque church has an unusual rounded facade and was built in the late 18th century in honour of the Virgin guiding pilgrims on their way to Santiago de Compostela. Also see the 13/14th century Saint Francis Convent and Church. Legend has it the church was founded by Saint Francis himself. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 3 Pazo de Lourizan, O Grove & Martin Codax Winery, Pontevedra.** This morning we drive to the modernist building of Pazo de Lourizan and its large estate of 54 hectares. A striking element of the enclosure is the large Modernist design greenhouse made from metal and glass and a stone granary dating from 1798. The Botanical Garden houses both exotic and native species planted from the 19th century to the present. Of note are the Dutch elm, the queen palm and the avenue of magnolias. Next we will visit the village of O Grove where we board a small catamaran for a trip along the estuary. Our guide will explain all about the mussel farming that forms the backbone of the economy of this area and has made it quite famous. Sample fresh boiled mussels, a delicious, briny taste of the region whilst enjoying a splendid view of the estuary. Continue driving through this land of Albarino wine to visit the cellar of Martin Codax ending with a wine tasting and tapas lunch. After lunch we follow the road back to Pontevedra enjoying scenic views of the estuary and the coastline. Return to the hotel where we have dinner this evening. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 4 Pazo de Rubianes, Pontevedra & Santiago de Compostela.** After breakfast we visit the impressive Pazo de Rubianes, an elegant country estate dating back to the late 17th century and surrounded by extensive vineyards and centuries-old camellias in all colours: yellow, white, fuchsia and red. We visit the interior of the main building which, since its refurbishment in the 18th century, was converted into a pazo. Our tour ends with a taste of the local wines produced on site served with lunch. We depart for Santiago de Compostela and on arrival check in to

the luxurious Parador de Santiago de Compostela for our three night stay. We take a walking tour through the Old Quarter visiting the cathedral which without a doubt is one of the great buildings of the world; its facade is a Baroque masterpiece, and there are even greater treasures within. We will end at the 80,000 square metre Alameda Gardens which was created in the 19th century and holds over fifty different species. This evening we will enjoy dinner in a local restaurant. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 5 Pazo de Faramello, Santiago de Compostela.** After breakfast we drive to Pazo de Faramello, an early 18th century building with strong Italian influences that give away the Genoese origin of its founder, the Marquis of Piombino. This pazo was the location of the first paper factory in Galicia and the old mills and its corresponding tools can still be visited. Admire the perfectly kept French 19th century gardens spread across more than two hectares leaning out in terraces over a tiny canyon whilst we enjoy lunch. We head back to our hotel and enjoy an afternoon at leisure. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 6 Pazo de Oca & Pazo de Ribadulla, Santiago de Compostela.** Pazo de Oca, usually referred to as "Galician Versailles" is the final milestone of St. James's way. Originally a fortress dating from the 12th century, it was during the 18th century when Fernando Gayoso, Marquis of Camarasa transformed it into its current appearance of golden granite stone wall that evokes a forgotten paradise full of romanticism. Above all, the gardens at Oca are what astonish the most. Recently restored to its 18th century glory, the beauty here is the fusion of formal garden with working farm. This is a mossy, misty melancholic garden, wonderful in early spring when the legendary camellias come out. We then visit the Pazo de Ribadulla which dates back to the 1500s. The English-style gardens, which were laid out in the 19th century, are subtler and more natural than the French-style gardens of the Pazo de Oca and include a pretty waterfall and a wonderful grove of olive trees, some of which are nearly 300 years old. After lunch we return to our hotel and enjoy our final afternoon at leisure. This evening we enjoy a farewell dinner at the hotel. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 7 Santiago de Compostela, La Coruna to London Heathrow.** After breakfast we leave our hotel and head towards La Coruna. En-route we will visit Pazo de Marinan, an old Galician Manor with splendid French style gardens. There are beautiful groups of azaleas, aucuba specimens, camellias, spiraeas, ivies, roses, and also yew trees and centuries-old specimens of clethra. Our journey will end at a local restaurant, with a great view over the ocean, tasting local dishes paired with good wines. We then drive to La Coruna airport for our return scheduled flight to London. **(B)**

### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

#### ROOM CATEGORY

Standard Room	£2495
Superior Room	£2745
Standard Room for sole use	£2945
Superior Room for sole use	£3345

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Three nights accommodation at Parador de Pontevedra • Three nights accommodation at Parador de Santiago de Compostela • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with dinner • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Guest Speaker • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

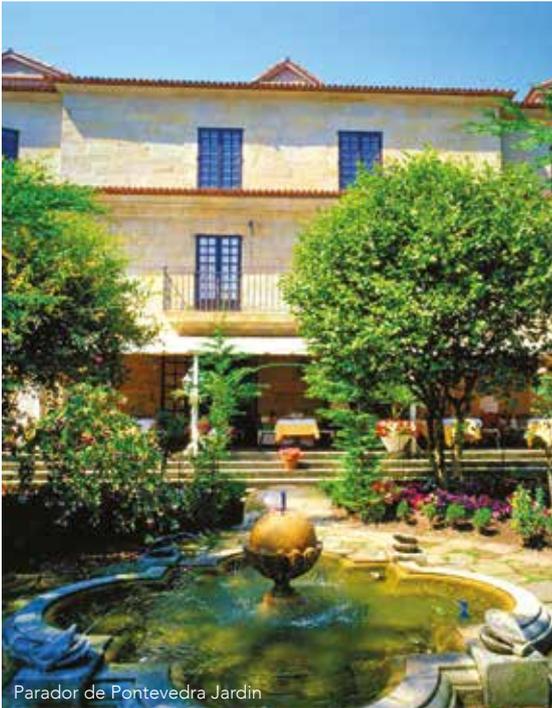
**NB:** Some of the excursions will include extended periods of walking including steps and over uneven terrain. We therefore do not recommend this tour for those with walking difficulties. Please also note that this tour departs from London Gatwick and returns to London Heathrow.

## YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our visit to the wonderful region of Galicia we have chosen two impressive paradors, both classically decorated in true parador style.

### Parador de Pontevedra

Located in the historic heart of Pontevedra, this impressive 16th century palace is classically decorated in true Parador style with an elegant restaurant serving delicious, regional cuisine including the wonderful fish and shellfish for which the region is famous. Meals may be accompanied by the excellent local Albarino, Ribeiro or Menica wines. Originally the residence of Count Maceda, the Parador de Pontevedra has been masterfully renovated to its past glory. Built of robust, local stone, the palace is surrounded by pretty landscaped gardens and a large sun terrace. The carved, stone staircase leads the way to the comfortable bedrooms furnished with antique-style decor and rich fabrics. The 47 rooms are air-conditioned with private bathrooms and the amenities include a minibar, safe, satellite TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, hairdryer and telephone. Relax in the elegant bar and lounge area while enjoying a drink or catch up with the day's newspapers.



Parador de Pontevedra Jardin



Parador de Pontevedra – superior room



Parador de Pontevedra



Parador de Pontevedra



Parador de Pontevedra – standard room

### Parador de Santiago de Compostela

Claiming to be the oldest hotel in the world, the Parador Santiago de Compostela was built in 1499 by order of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella. Once a royal hospital, which provided lodging and shelter for many pilgrims who arrived in the city following the 'Camino de Santiago' the impressive building along with the Romanesque Cathedral beside it and the Plaza de Obradoiro have now been named a UNESCO World Heritage Site and are proclaimed as historic jewels. The Parador itself combines Gothic, Renaissance and Baroque elements which can be seen throughout the luxurious public areas and bedrooms. The original hospital was built between 1499 and 1519 whilst the balconade and Baroque windows were added at the end of the 17th century. The Parador features four impressive cloisters and has a number of lounge areas for guests to relax in. The hotel's two restaurants feature exposed stone walls and candelabras. The Dos Reis serves a range of Mediterranean cuisine, while the Enxebre specialises in seafood and traditional Galician dishes. Each of the 137 spacious rooms spread over four floors offers classic decor with a private bathroom and modern comforts such as wooden/parqueted flooring, minibar, safe, satellite TV, complimentary Wi-Fi, hairdryer and telephone.



Parador Santiago superior room



Parador Santiago restaurant



Parador Santiago dining



# GARDENS OF MADEIRA

Explore the gardens and scenic wonders of Madeira whilst enjoying the luxury of Belmond Reid's Palace with Guest Speaker Rosemary Legrand

14<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> April 2021

Madeira is scenically stunning – stark mountain peaks give way to lush cultivated terraces, where every patch of land is utilised to such colourful effect. Wine, bananas and exotic flowers, which form the backbone of the island's economy, create the amazingly lush landscape and together with the unique architecture make Madeira a very special place. Not only is it visually stunning, it also has a historic and cultural depth rarely found on isolated islands of its size. The first Portuguese settlers arrived in the early 1400's and exploited Madeira's fertile soil and perfect climate. Growing 'white gold' the island grew rich on abundant sugar cane harvests and diversified into wines and growing provisions for the ever-increasing sea trade.

We have chosen the iconic Belmond Reid's Palace for our stay, one of the best-loved resort hotels in the world. A fine tradition, marvellous location and an ownership that has lavished vast sums of money and love means that today it is one of the finest hotels in the world.

Madeira is a wonderful place for a relaxing week and when you can pull yourself away from the beautiful gardens and pool terraces of Belmond Reid's Palace, there is much to explore. We have therefore devised an itinerary which includes ample time to enjoy the hotel but with the added benefit of included guided excursions, with a focus on the island's wonderful gardens allowing you to experience some of the breathtakingly stunning scenery, stroll around private gardens, learn something of Madeira's history and sample the wines.

## Guest Speaker – Rosemary Legrand



Rosemary is a former nursery owner and daughter of the late George Hyde, who was a hybridist of azaleas and rhododendrons. Many of his award winning hybrid plants can be seen at the Royal Horticultural Society's gardens at Wisley, Surrey, the de Rothschild rhododendron gardens at Exbury, Hampshire and the National Trust Gardens at Kingston

Lacy in Dorset. Rosemary had the honour of presenting HM The Queen with a collection of her late Father's azaleas named after the Queen's former Head Gardener, Fred Nutbeam, at the Chelsea Flower Show in 1996. Her enjoyment of photography is used to great effect in creating the atmosphere of the gardens she discusses in her range of illustrated talks. She has travelled extensively to gardens in many parts of the world to amass a substantial library of pictures. Rosemary is an experienced public speaker and has given presentations to a wide range of organisations since 1992. She is on the RHS Speakers Register, is a NAFAS Area Speaker, and wrote a number of contributions for the book, '1001 Gardens you must see before you die' and an article for the Royal Horticultural Society 'Rhododendron, Camellia and Magnolia 2014 Year Book'."



Botanical gardens, Funchal

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Madeira, Portugal.** Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the luxurious Belmond Reid's Palace for a seven night stay. Enjoy a welcome dinner at the hotel this evening. **(D)**

**Day 2 City Tour.** This morning we take a panoramic sightseeing tour of Funchal. Our first stop will be at the city market, where we will see the local produce of Madeira, baskets filled with tropical fruit and vegetables, flowers, local handicrafts and an impressive fish market. After stopping at various points of interest in the town centre, we visit the Madeira Wine Lodge, one of the oldest wine lodges in Madeira, where we will learn about the Madeira Wine, world famous for over 400 years. After lunch in a local restaurant we will return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure to enjoy the facilities. **(B, L)**

**Day 3 Quinta do Palheiro & Lunch at Clubhouse of Palheiro Gardens.** Madeira is famed for its beautiful flowers and today's tour will give you a glimpse of some of the vegetation of Madeira. The gardens of Quinta do Palheiro, currently owned by the Blandy family were originally laid out in the 18th century. Some of the original themed gardens have survived to the present day, plus new plants have been introduced, making the gardens even more fascinating. After our visit to the garden, lunch will be served at the Clubhouse Restaurant of Palheiro Golf course. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure. **(B, L)**



Monte Tropical Garden and Palace



Santa Catarina Park



Madeira coastline



Quinta do Palheiro

#### Day 4 Quinta das Cruzes Museum & Quinta da Boa Vista Gardens.

Quinta das Cruzes Museum is located in the centre of Funchal and features a vast collection of decorative art and antiques from the 17th and 18th century. Once the formal residence of Joao Goncalves Zarco, the museum is surrounded by beautiful gardens offering a variety of exotic flowers, trees and other species of flora. After our visit we continue to Quinta da Boa Vista Garden, well known for the many fine varieties of orchids and 20-year-old orchid exhibition. Today this family run garden is dedicated to the preservation of many species of plants and flowers, some of which are close to extinction. Quinta da Boa Vista is proud to present not just the best orchid collection but rare exotic plants from all around the world. Enjoy an afternoon at leisure before meeting this evening for dinner at Restaurante do Forte in the Fortress of Sao Tiago which offers superb regional, national and international gastronomy. Dinner will be served in the middle roof terrace with a view to the sea and mountains (if the weather does not permit the use of the outdoor areas, dinner will be held under cover on the ground floor of the fort). (B, D)

**Day 5 East Tour – Santana.** This morning we head towards the central mountain range, over Poiso Pass to Pico de Arieiro, the third highest peak of the island which offers magnificent views on a clear day. We continue to Ribeiro Frio to visit the trout hatchery and for those interested, enjoy a short leisurely walk to Balcoes. This area is also known for the Laurisilva forest and several Laurisilva forest species and some indigenous flora and fauna can be observed along the levada walk. We continue through Faial and stop for lunch followed by a visit to the village of Santana, famous for the traditional houses with thatched roofs and the densely planted vineyards. Our penultimate stop today will be the village of Porto da Cruz and up to Portela for wonderful views of the island before continuing to the village of Machico, once a small fishing village, hidden in the bay and stretching out over the hillsides. (B, L)

**Day 6 Botanical Gardens.** Since the 17th century, Madeira had wanted a Botanical Garden – a dream that came true in 1960. The Botanical Gardens, with an area of over 35,000 square metres, has more than 2000 exotic plants from all continents, some of which are endangered species. This fantastic garden has several ornamental trees and shrubs, an orchid area, lawns, and lovely viewpoints. After our visit to the garden, we will drive up towards the eastern end of the island to the parish of Sao

Gongalo, for lunch in a typical Madeira restaurant. After lunch we return to the hotel for an afternoon at leisure. (B, L)

**Day 7 Monte Palace Tropical Garden & Eira do Serrado.** This morning we visit Monte, a charming village high in the hills overlooking Funchal. We will reach Monte by cable car experiencing wonderful views along the way. Once at Monte we will visit the Monte Palace Tropical Garden. This garden collection has been enriched with plants from all over the world and about 100,000 plant species have been planted. The garden also features a collection of cycads (encephalartos) which, because of their age, are considered living fossils. We continue to Eira do Serrado from where we will enjoy incredible views over Curral das Freiras – ‘Nun’s Valley’, a small village situated deep in an extinct crater not far from the highest peak of Madeira. Enjoy a final afternoon at leisure before we meet this evening for our farewell dinner at the hotel. (B, D)

**Day 8 Madeira to London.** Transfer to the airport for the return scheduled flight to London. (B)

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

#### ROOM CATEGORY

Classic Room	£2795
Superior Room	£2995
Deluxe Room	£3295
Classic Room for sole use	£3995
Superior Room for sole use	£4195

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights accommodation at Belmond Reid’s Palace • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with meals included • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Guest Speaker • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

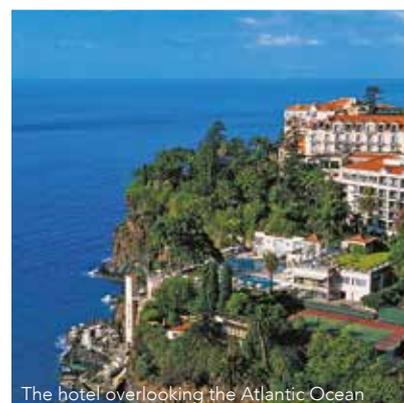
**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

## YOUR HOTEL – BELMOND REID'S PALACE



The hotel's Villa Cipriani Italian Restaurant

Set on the cliff tops overlooking the Bay of Funchal and the Atlantic, Belmond Reid's Palace has, for over 100 years, been a standard-bearer for excellence. Scotsman William Reid, who in 1891 founded Madeira's now most celebrated hotel, would take justifiable pride in the world-wide reputation rightly earned by this fine establishment. Many grand hotels with a history find it impossible to adapt to the changing needs of the modern market. Not so Reid's, which has glided from generation to generation subtly adapting to new market needs, yet never discarding its classic style or forgetting its great heritage. The result today is a superbly comfortable resort hotel, which pays great attention to its individual guests' requirements and sets the standard in that small club of truly great five star hotels.



The hotel overlooking the Atlantic Ocean

### Your Accommodation

All Belmond Reid's Palace rooms feature balconies and face the sea and gardens offering wonderful views of the beautiful coastline. Complimentary mini bar for non-alcoholic drinks, iPod docking station and free internet is also included. In addition each room features air-conditioning, bathrobes, in-room safe, Cable TV and Video/DVD.

**Classic Rooms:** These offer an average of 23 square metres of living space in a traditional style. Enjoy partial sea views on the private balcony. Classic rooms offer private marble baths and one king or twin beds.

**Superior Rooms:** These offer an average of 26 square metres of living space. The Superior Rooms offer balconies or private patios, sea views or garden views, private marble baths and one king or twin beds.

**Deluxe Rooms:** These offer an average of 31 square metres of living space and are located in the most sought-after locations with large covered balconies and great sea views.



Bathroom



Deluxe Room



Superior Room



Dining Room



The Tea Terrace



Swimming Pool



Lounge

## Your Space

Set in ten acres of lush semi-tropical gardens overlooking the Atlantic Ocean, this is the perfect place to relax and discover the beauty of the plants and birds that make Madeira such a remarkable place. For more active pursuits there are two heated pools, one with salt water, one with fresh water and a tidal pool by the sea. The property also features two tennis courts, fitness room and sauna. Other facilities include a bridge and games room, library, lounges and bars, beauty salon and boutique.

## Your Dining

Dining is always a pleasure at Belmond Reid's Palace. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast in the Garden Room Restaurant, or a buffet lunch on the Pool Terrace. The recently opened William Restaurant, led by Executive Chef Luis Pestana and supervised by the Michelin star chef Joachim Koerper, is a tribute to the visionary and creative man William Reid, founder of the hotel, who having seen a simple rock visualized the future. This new addition offers a creative approach on modern European food, where contemporary meets Madeira, to create seasonal food of the highest quality. The Dining room is the Lady of Reid's restaurants with drooping Murano Glass chandeliers and Edwardian decoration. Afternoon Tea is an iconic event at Reid's Palace dating back to when the hotel first opened. The (High) Afternoon Tea boasts Reid's Palace Own Blend Tea. Finally, Villa Cipriani is Reid's informal Italian restaurant, perched on a cliff top.



Hotel gardens

# GLORIOUS GEORGIA

An in-depth escorted tour visiting the treasures of Georgia

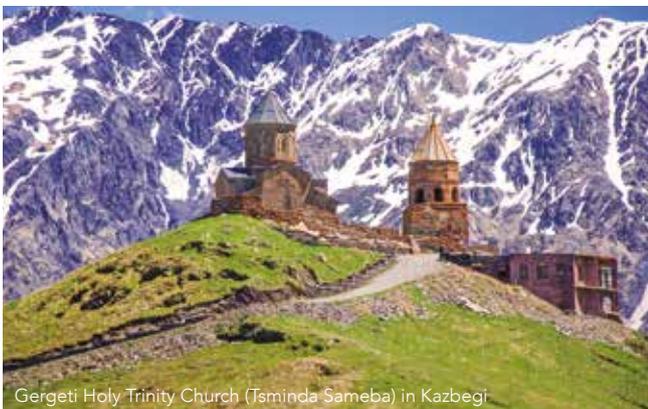
27<sup>th</sup> April to 10<sup>th</sup> May & 28<sup>th</sup> September to 11<sup>th</sup> October 2021

The former Kingdom of Georgia lies to the north east of Turkey in a particularly beautiful part of the world where green valleys are spread with vineyards and old churches and watchtowers perch in fantastic mountain scenery. We begin our tour with a two night stay in the ancient and captivating city of Istanbul from where we fly to Tbilisi, capital of Georgia to begin our exploration of this stunning and diverse country.

Discover the many facets of this ancient land including Tbilisi, one of the world's oldest settlements and a beguiling mix of natural beauty and disheveled charm, the eastern winemaking region of Kakheti and journey along the famed Georgian Military Highway to the border town of Kazbegi. We will see mysterious cave cities and many beautiful early Christian monuments along the way, remembering that Georgia embraced Christianity as far back as the 3rd century AD, before descending to the waters of the Black Sea and the seaside city of Batumi.

Georgia's complicated history is one of invasions and yet the country has survived with its own unique identity and a wonderful heritage of architecture and arts. Despite the long years of Soviet occupation, it is a country moving forward in the 21st century with an ever-improving tourist infrastructure and for our stay we have selected modern, comfortable hotels. The road surfaces are not always perfect and some of the travel distances long, but there is very little traffic and beautiful scenery to admire as we journey along.

We do hope that you can join us for what promises to be a fascinating tour of this beautiful country that remains off the usual tourist trail despite its warm hospitable people, delicious food and wealth of cultural and historic treasures on offer.



Gergeti Holy Trinity Church (Tsminda Sameba) in Kazbegi

## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Istanbul, Turkey.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the Pera Palace Hotel for a two night stay. The remainder of the day is free for independent exploration before we meet for dinner this evening. (D)

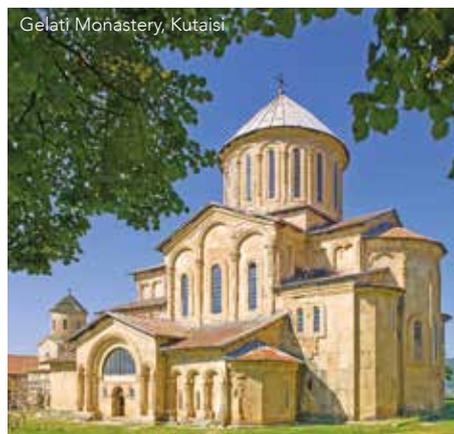
**Day 2 Istanbul.** With a history embracing almost three millennia, Turkey's largest metropolis is also one of the world's oldest existing cities. Tour the city's highlights including the Topkapi Palace, the Hippodrome, Blue Mosque and Grand Bazaar. Return to the hotel for an evening at leisure. (B, L)

**Day 3 Istanbul to Tbilisi, Georgia.** After breakfast in the hotel return to the airport for our scheduled flight to Tbilisi. On arrival we will meet our guide and driver and transfer to the Marriott Hotel, our base for the next three nights. After free time to settle into the hotel or explore the local area, we will meet for dinner tonight. (B, D)

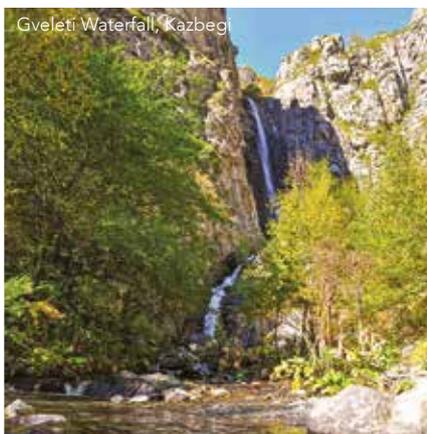
**Day 4 Tbilisi.** Today we have a full day to explore Tbilisi. In over 1500 years since becoming the capital of Georgia, the city has been destroyed and rebuilt on nearly 30 different occasions. The city has rebounded in recent years to become one of the most lively and cosmopolitan cities in the Caucasus. It is difficult to find another city in which an Orthodox church, a mosque, a synagogue and a Roman Catholic church are built in the same quarter. We visit some of these as well as the National Museum, the Narikala Fortress and the Sulphur Baths. This evening we will enjoy an after-hours visit to one of the museums for a private dinner with local entertainment. (B, L, D)

**Day 5 Kakheti & Tsinandali.** Today we will explore the picturesque region of Kakheti, which borders the Great Caucasus range and was the birthplace of viticulture and wine-making in Georgia. Here the rich land has developed about 500 varieties of vine. Our first stop will be at the Tsinandali Family Estate and wine cellar. This impressive estate once belonged to the 19th century aristocratic poet Alexander Chavchavadze and was frequented by many intellectuals of arts and sciences including Pushkin and Alexander Dumas. The complex now incorporates a landscaped garden, museum and cellar containing many vintage bottles of wine. We will continue to a local winery for a tasting and a traditional barbeque lunch. After lunch we return to Tbilisi and spend the remainder of the day and evening at leisure. (B, L)

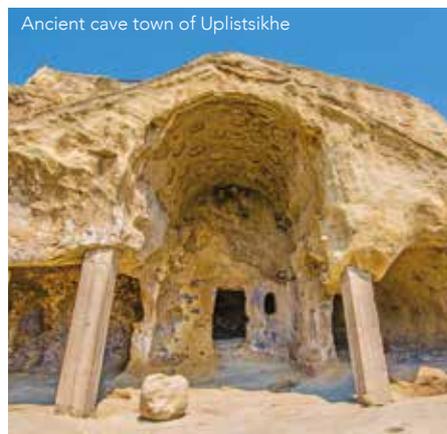
**Day 6 Mtskheta, Ananuri & Gudauri.** Today's drive takes us north along the famed Georgian Military Highway. Our first stop is in sacred Mtskheta, the ancient capital of eastern Georgia. Visit several of its historic monuments including the beautiful 6th century Church of Jvari perched on a cliff overlooking the city and Svetitshoveli Cathedral, the first Christian church in Georgia. We continue our drive to Ananuri to see the incredible 16th century fortress complex, built by the warring Dukes of Aragvi to control the main road, and then continue to Gudauri, the highest village along the route and a popular winter mountain resort. On arrival we will check in to the Marco Polo Hotel for our two night stay. (B, L, D)



Gelati Monastery, Kutaisi



Gveleti Waterfall, Kazbegi



Ancient cave town of Uplistsikhe

**Day 7 Kazbegi.** This morning we continue to drive north towards the Russian border and the town of Kazbegi located in sight of Mount Kazbek. Here we will visit the the isolated 14th century Gergeti Holy Trinity Church, surrounded by mountains at an elevation of 2170 metres. We will have the option for a strenuous walk or to join the four-wheel drive to the peak. Enjoy lunch with a local family before driving along the dramatic Dariali Gorge and taking a walk to the Gveleti waterfalls. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 8 Gori, Uplistsikhe & Borjomi.** We begin our descent today from the mountains, stopping for lunch in a local restaurant in Gori, the birthplace of Joseph Stalin. We will visit the Stalin Museum designed around the house where he was born together with his private railway carriage. Continue to nearby Uplistsikhe, an ancient cave town dating from the first half of the 1st millennium BC. The entire town is a complex of rock-cut streets, residences, early churches, secret tunnels, water passages, markets and the oldest theatre in Georgia. We end the day in Borjomi, a town famed for its mineral water industry, and check in for our two night stay at the Crowne Plaza Hotel. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 9 Borjomi, Akhaltsikhe & Vardzia.** Today we explore the Samtskhe-Javakheti region which is located towards the Turkish and Armenian borders and is named after two of the original Georgian tribes – the Meskh and Javakhs. It is considered as the cradle of Georgian culture. The road leads past arid and stone-terraced landscapes and green valleys littered with centuries-old fortresses. In Akhaltsikhe we will see Rabati Castle, developed under the influence of different cultures and which includes a church, mosque, minaret and synagogue. After lunch we will continue to the Vardzia Cave Complex. Founded in the 12th century, during the reign of Giorgi III and Queen Tamar, the complex became a well-fortified monastery, which had a significant role in the political, cultural, educational and spiritual life of Georgia. For those that prefer a more leisurely day there will be the option to stay in Borjomi and visit the mineral park and Timotesubani Monastery. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 10 Kutaisi.** Drive via the picturesque Rikoti Pass to Kutaisi which is known to have existed as early as the 7th century BC as a town in the Greek colony of Miletus. It was its enviable position that allowed it to flourish as an important trade centre on the caravan route from Greece to India. We will see Bagrati Cathedral, the 11th century cathedral built during the reign of King Bagrat III and known as “the symbol of united Georgia”, and the Gelati Monastery. This UNESCO World Heritage Site was founded in 1106 by the famous King of Georgia, David the Builder, and the Gelati Complex includes an academy that has preserved a great number of manuscripts dating back to the 12th century. Transfer to the Best Western Hotel, our base for the next two nights and enjoy some free time before we meet for dinner this evening. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 11 Prometheus Caves & Martvili.** Our first call today will be at the Prometheus Caves, a 1.2 kilometre-long cave complex providing breathtaking examples of stalactites, stalagmites, petrified waterfalls, underground rivers, and lakes which we will explore by small boat. Afterwards we will drive the short distance to Martvili, a stunning combination of unique natural wonders and historical monuments. Return to Kutaisi for an evening at leisure and the chance to find a local restaurant for dinner. **(B, L)**

**Day 12 Batumi.** After breakfast in the hotel we will drive to the port city of Batumi, located on the Black Sea. Its seaside location with a sweeping cornice, a backdrop of mountains and 19th century architecture, make it very different from any other place in the country. Batumi existed as a small town as far back as the time of the Greeks when it was known as one of the Black Sea's principal ports, and then under the Ottomans, but it was under the Russians that it grew in both size and importance and was the Black Sea outlet for oil from the Caspian. Visit the Batumi Botanical Garden, set over 111 hectares with views of the Black Sea and made up of plants from as far afield as New Zealand, Australia, Himalaya, East Asia and South America. Continue to the old city and wander the streets seeing Piazza Square, the statue of Medea and Seaside Park. Check in to the Sheraton Hotel this afternoon for our two night stay and meet for dinner this evening. **(B, L, D)**

**Day 13 Batumi.** The Autonomous Republic of Ajara, in which Batumi lies, is in the extreme southwest of Georgia on the border with Turkey. Twelfth century bridges and cult constructions from the time of Queen Tamar have survived and we will visit Gonio, the fortress-city of the early Feudal period, that towers majestically over the vicinity. Gonio fortress is closely connected to the Myth of the Argonauts. According to the legend, this is a site where King Ayet buried his son Apsaros, who was killed by Jason. Return to the hotel and enjoy a free afternoon to explore at your own pace before we meet for a farewell dinner this evening. **(B, D)**

**Day 14 Batumi to London.** After breakfast in the hotel we will transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London via Istanbul. Arrive this afternoon. **(B)**

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Twin	£3495
Single	£4195

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Two nights accommodation in Istanbul • 11 nights hotel accommodation in Georgia • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer & soft drinks with included meals • Excursions as described • English speaking local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

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

**NB:** Some of the excursions, particularly those on days 7, 8 & 9, will involve extended periods of walking including steps and over uneven terrain. We therefore do not recommend this tour for those with walking difficulties. Please also note that we will be staying at a number of different hotels as travelling long distances is required to visit the country's main highlights.

## YOUR ACCOMMODATION

We have selected some of the best accommodation available for our tour and will be staying at the following properties:



The hotel entrance



Deluxe Golden Horn View room

### Pera Palace Hotel, Istanbul – Two nights

The Pera Palace Hotel was established in 1892 to accommodate travellers arriving on the Orient Express train from Paris and has accommodated many distinguished guests including Ernest Hemmingway, Agatha Christie and Greta Garbo. It offers stunning views of the Golden Horn and is located in the historic Pera district within walking distance of Istiklal street. The hotel features an indoor pool, luxurious spa and dining options include the Agatha Restaurant. All rooms offer en-suite marble bathrooms, air conditioning, complimentary Wi-Fi and satellite television.



Hotel exterior



Guest Room

### Crowne Plaza Hotel, Borjomi – Two nights

Situated in the heart of Borjomi, nestled between the hills and a small river, Crowne Plaza Borjomi features 101 guest rooms with Wi-Fi, tea and coffee making facilities and satellite television. Dining options include all day dining on the terrace, or lunch and dinner may be enjoyed in the à la carte restaurant followed by some Georgian specialities in the Wine Bar or Lobby Bar. For relaxation, visit the large Spa & Wellness Centre with swimming pool, steam rooms, floating baths and a yoga room.



Guest Room



Parnas Cafe



Restaurant Terrace



Guest Room

### Marriott Hotel, Tbilisi – Three nights

With a city centre location and modern amenities, the Tbilisi Marriott Hotel is an ideal base from which to explore Georgia's unique capital city. Located in an elegant historical building, there is an atrium-style lobby with striking crystal chandeliers and the immaculately appointed air-conditioned rooms offers deluxe bedding, a marble bathroom, safe and satellite television. Hotel facilities include the Parnas Cafe, Lounge & Restaurant and Majestic Lounge & Bar and there is also a 24-hour gym with sauna and massage.



Lobby



Guest Room

### Best Western Hotel, Kutaisi – Two nights

Located in the heart of Kutaisi, the Best Western Hotel is only a couple of steps away from the historic centre of the city. Designed to offer a modern feel, while at the same time respecting Georgian culture, the hotel offers exceptional customer service that perfectly blends with local hospitality. Offering contemporary interiors and premium amenities, the 45 bedrooms each offer free wireless high-speed Internet access, satellite television, safe and air-conditioning. There are two restaurants and wonderful views can be enjoyed from the rooftop terrace.



Guest Room



Pool

### Marco Polo Hotel, Gudauri – Two nights

This hotel is situated in the mountains around the Gudauri ski resort. There are 123 rooms, all tastefully decorated in neutral colours with minibar, desk, flat-screen TV and complimentary Wi-Fi. There is also a private bathroom in which slippers, bathrobes and toiletries are provided. The hotel facilities include a fitness centre and spa area with an indoor pool, sauna and hot tub. A variety of European and Caucasian specialities are served in the classic-style restaurant, and the cosy bar features a fireplace.

### Sheraton Hotel, Batumi – Two nights

Sheraton Batumi is located in the heart of the city, next to the famous Batumi Boulevard and the Black Sea beach, and just a few minutes walking distance to the historic centre. All of the 45 spacious, air-conditioned rooms feature comfortable beds, tea and coffee making facilities, safe and satellite television. Lunch, dinner and drinks can be taken at the 360 Sky Bar, providing 360-degree panoramas over the city and the Black Sea, whilst the breakfast buffet is served in the Sunflower Restaurant. Onsite facilities include a spa, 24-hour gym and indoor pool.



# SCENIC WONDERS OF SLOVENIA

A seven night escorted tour of the music, lakes & landscapes of Slovenia including Lake Bled

11<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> May & 17<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> September 2021

Surely Europe's best kept secret, Slovenia offers a wonderfully diverse geography boasting towering Alpine peaks, sparkling emerald-green lakes, beautiful countryside, peaceful villages and even its own stretch of the Venetian style coastline. Since the 10 day war of independence in 1991, this tiny country has undergone an evolution in its tourist infrastructure with Lake Bled being the jewel in its crown. This beautiful cobalt-blue lake with its tiny castle-topped island in the middle is undoubtedly a highlight and yet there is so much more on offer; and over the course of the week we will discover Slovenia's many hidden treasures.

From Lake Bled in the northwest to Lipica close to the Italian border; this in-depth journey offers the perfect balance of beautiful National Parks and scenic landscapes combined with visits to glorious gardens such as the beautiful Ferrari Garden in Stanjel and Mozirski Gaj flower park in Mozirje. There are many natural wonders to be discovered along the way including Rinka Waterfall and Bohinj Lake as well as a wealth of cultural attractions. We will tour the Lipica stud farm and watch the elegant horses perform, stroll through the charming streets of Ljubljana with its Art Nouveau splendours and excellent museums and enjoy two exclusive music recitals, one held in the capital and another in the historic castle grounds of Villa Ferrari.

During the course of our eight day escorted tour, we will stay in two delightful properties, one with magnificent views over Lake Bled and the other idyllically set in the Logar Valley, one of the most beautiful Alpine glacial valleys in Europe. The itinerary will be well-paced so that, when not enjoying the guided tours or exploring independently, there will be time to relax and appreciate the tranquillity of these wonderful settings, partaking in a gentler style of tourism that suits Slovenia so well.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Ljubljana, Slovenia.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to Hotel Rikli Balance for our four night stay. Settle into your room before meeting for dinner at the hotel this evening. (D)

**Day 2 Bled & Radovljica.** Bled grew famous at the beginning of the 20th century as the most beautiful health spa of the then Austrian empire. After World War II it became one of the most attractive state residences for the former regime and hosted many of the world's most important people who enjoyed the beauty of the town. After breakfast at the hotel we will explore the impressive Medieval castle before joining a local 'Pletna' boat for a cruise to the lake's famous islet. Once back ashore, transfer to nearby Radovljica and its beautiful Linhart Square to learn about the traditional Slovenian craft of lectar, a sweet honey-bread that is decorated by hand. Enjoy a local lunch here before returning to Bled for an afternoon and evening at leisure. (B, L)

**Day 3 Lipica & Stanjel.** This morning journey south, close to the Italian border. Our destination is the famous Lipica Stud Farm, one of the most important cultural and historical sites in the country. Home to the Lipizzaner horse, the farm has been in operation for over 400 years and is home to over 350 horses. Tour the grounds of the estate, including the museum and the historic barns before enjoying a performance by the Lipica Classical Riding School. A short transfer brings us to the hilltop town of Stanjel, one of the oldest settlements in the Karst Region dating back to the 15th century. After lunch at a local restaurant we visit the beautiful Ferrari Garden which offers wonderful views of the Branica Valley, before enjoying an exclusive classical recital in the historic surroundings of the castle. Return to Bled and meet for dinner this evening at the historic Vila Bled. (B, L, D)

**Day 4 Bohinj Lake & Vogel.** A day of appreciating the natural beauty of the area awaits. Located in the Triglav National Park, Lake Bohinj is the



Bohinj Lake in Triglav National Park



Lipizzaner performing horses at Lipica Stud Farm



Traditional old Karst stone house, Stanjel



Colourful tulips, Volcji Potok Arboretum



Rinka Waterfall, Logarska Valley

less well-known of the two major alpine lakes of Slovenia, and whilst it is less-developed than its near-neighbour in Bled, therein lies its charm. Surrounded by stunning forest-clad peaks, a specialist guide will give us an insight into the huge variety of local flora before we take the Vogel cable car up to the Bohinj ski resort, a major attraction in the wintertime but an area of relative peace and tranquillity in early or late summer. At 1800 metres above sea level it affords stunning views of the Alps and the lake and is the perfect place to relax and take some time to admire the surroundings. Return to Bled following lunch and spend the rest of the day exploring independently. (B, L)

**Day 5 Volcji Potok & Ljubljana.** Check out of the hotel this morning and following a short drive, explore Slovenia's largest botanical park, the Volcji Potok Arboretum. Founded in 1952 by the University of Ljubljana, the 80 hectare site contains a diverse mix of plant collections and is a wonderful place to explore. Continue on to the nation's capital, Ljubljana. The city has a rich heritage – it has been inhabited since the Bronze Age – and is situated by a river on which the mythological Argonauts carried the Golden Fleece. It was occupied by the Romans and was once the capital of Napoleon's Illyrian provinces, and has treasures from many epochs including Renaissance and Baroque, and striking architecture featuring many Art Nouveau façades. After lunch at a local restaurant we will take a guided walking tour of this fine city's highlights and take a short cruise on the Ljubljanica River. Enjoy an exclusive recital in the atrium of the Academy of Science and Art before leaving the city and driving northeast to the dramatic Logarska Valley. Check in to Hotel Plesnik for our three night stay. Dinner will be served at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 6 Logarska Valley & Rinka Waterfall.** This morning we take a short drive up to the head of the valley followed by a short hike to visit the Rinka Waterfall, a 105 metre high cascade that forms the source of the Savinja River. Take some time here to soak up the surroundings, or perhaps visit the spectacularly located café for refreshments. Lunch will be provided at the hotel today, and the afternoon remains at leisure for relaxation in the stunning natural beauty of the Logarska Valley. This evening we have arranged a special picnic-style dinner with an open fire in the gardens of the hotel. (B, L, D)

**Day 7 Mozirski Gaj.** After a leisurely breakfast at the hotel enjoy a scenic drive along the Savinja Valley. From its source at the Rinka Waterfall, the waters of the Savinja River eventually reach the sea in the Danube Delta over a thousand miles away, and our journey this morning takes us through dramatic upper-valley gorges and past idyllic alpine villages. Eventually, the geography changes somewhat, and we journey through a cluster of farming villages located on the lush valley bottom before reaching our destination, the town of Mozirje. Here we explore Mozirski Gaj, the Slovenian Gardener's Park, situated on the banks of the river and home to a wonderful collection of different installations, including a Japanese garden and herb garden. Explore the beautiful gardens at leisure and maybe visit the collection of historical buildings comprising an ethnographical exposition on site. Following lunch in Mozirje, return to the hotel for a final afternoon in the beautiful Logarska Valley before meeting for a farewell dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Logarska Valley to London.** After breakfast transfer to Ljubljana airport for our return scheduled flight to London. A light lunch will be served en-route to the airport. (B, L)

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

Double Room	£3095
Double Room for sole use	£3595

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights hotel accommodation • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Excursions • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# YOUR ACCOMMODATION

For our escorted tour of Slovenia we have selected some of the finest accommodation available and will be staying at the following properties:



View across the lake to the castle from the pool

## Rikli Balance Hotel, Bled

The recently refurbished Rikli Balance Hotel occupies an elevated position in the beautiful town of Bled and affords spectacular views across the lake to the castle and famous islet. Located just 100 yards from the shoreline, the hotel has easy access to both the lakefront promenade and the many nearby bars and restaurants and is the perfect base for our exploration. We will be staying in the lake view rooms with all the modern conveniences including air-conditioning, complimentary Wi-Fi, tea and coffee making facilities, TV, safe and minibar.



Lobby



Double Room with Lake View



Bathroom



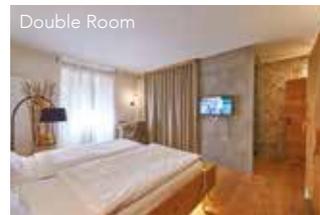
Restaurant



Hotel Plesnik and the Kamnik Savinja Alps

## Hotel Plesnik, Logarska Dolina

Sitting in the calm of a flower-filled valley, with the dramatic backdrop of snow-covered alpine peaks, this delightful family-run, chalet style property offers the most spectacular and unspoilt location. The hotel provides the perfect starting point for some magnificent walks and also offers cycle hire, a sauna, whirlpool and indoor pool. The hotel's restaurant serves a varied menu of locally-sourced organic food, and the spacious hotel terrace offers direct views across meadows and the striking and mighty mountains of the Kamnik Savinja-Alps. The recently refurbished rooms feature complimentary Wi-Fi, satellite TV, safe and minibar.



Double Room



Whirlpool and Wellness Centre



Outdoor Pool and the Meadows



Lobby



Restaurant



# BESSARABIA & BEYOND

A unique escorted tour of Moldova & Odessa

13<sup>th</sup> May to 23<sup>rd</sup> May & 9<sup>th</sup> to 19<sup>th</sup> September 2021

There are few places left in the world, especially in Europe, that can be legitimately referred to as 'off the beaten track' but Moldova is certainly a country that can lay claim to the description. Our in-depth, escorted tour of this charming country, with its rich cultural heritage, will explore a wealth of interesting sites including Medieval fortresses, magnificent wineries and the autonomous territory of Transnistria with its Soviet architecture. Crossing into Ukraine we will visit Odessa, the 'pearl of the Black Sea', to admire the splendid architecture and explore the fascinating labyrinth of underground tunnels before returning to Moldova where our final days will be spent admiring the beautiful, untouched countryside and of course enjoying the local food and splendid wines of the region.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London Stansted to Chisinau, Moldova.** Fly by scheduled flight. Arrive this evening into Moldova's capital, Chisinau and transfer to the Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel, our base for the next five nights. Meet tonight for dinner in the hotel. (D)

**Day 2 Chisinau & Capriana Monastery.** After breakfast in the hotel, we will enjoy a walking tour of Chisinau including the Central Cathedral, Parliament building and the excellent National Museum of Ethnography and Natural History. After lunch at a local restaurant, continue on to the 15th century Capriana Monastery, the current residence of the Metropolitan Bishop and the base for many past rulers of Moldova including Stefan the Great. The monastery was closed during the Soviet rule but was reopened in the early 1990s following an extensive renovation, and is home to Moldova's largest religious library. We return to Chisinau this evening and enjoy dinner in a local restaurant. (B, L, D)

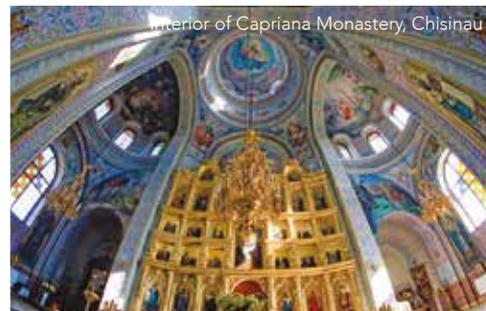
**Day 3 Cricova Winery & Orheiul Vechi.** In recent years Moldova has become renowned for its wines and this morning we will visit one of the most popular cellars at Cricova, which produces some of the country's best sparkling wine. We will learn about the production methods, which follow the French system very closely, before exploring the huge cellar network. Situated 80 metres underground and stretching out for a total of 120 kilometres, these cellars are used by both the vineyard and many wine aficionados as a personal vault. After our tasting, we continue our journey to Butuceni for lunch in a local restaurant with national Moldovan dishes on offer. This afternoon we will visit Orheiul Vechi, Moldova's

most important historical site. See the impressive 13th century Cave Monastery, carved into the limestone rock, the ruins of the Geto Dacian fortress and visit the Ethnographic Museum. We will return to Chisinau for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 4 Gagauzia.** Located in southwest Moldova is the autonomous region of Gagauzia. This little-visited territory is home to Gagauzians, a minority group of Turkic origin that affiliate with the Eastern Orthodox Church. Gagauzians migrated from Bulgaria together with ethnic Bulgarians and settled in Moldova in the 19th century. We will visit the capital of the region, Comrat and, after a local lunch, tour the neighbouring village of Besalma and visit a local house to learn about life in the region. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 5 Clisova Noua & Soroca.** This morning we visit a handicraft museum in the village of Clisova Noua. Reflecting Moldavian way of life, customs and traditions, this small museum showcases samples of national objects of Moldavia's people and culture. Afterwards, we head north towards Soroca near the Ukrainian border. Here, following a traditional lunch, we will visit the impressive Medieval fortress which played an important and key role in the defensive battle against the Turks and was one of the 'stone belt of fortresses' built to protect Moldova. Return to Chisinau for dinner this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 6 Transnistria & Odessa, Ukraine.** Situated to the east of Chisinau, on the Ukrainian border, is the state of Transnistria. Officially part of



Moldova, it is run as an autonomous territory and clings to its Soviet roots; statues of Lenin overlook the streets and Russian is the official language whilst the hammer and sickle flag flies from the buildings. We will start our day in Tiraspol, the capital of Transnistria. On a city tour we will see the monument of Lenin, outside of the Presidential Palace, the World War II tanks, and the unique and typically Soviet architecture. Afterwards enjoy a small performance by the veterans of Transnistria. We will enjoy lunch at a local restaurant before travelling to Odessa, crossing the border into Ukraine, and arriving in the late afternoon at the Bristol Hotel, our base for the next three nights. Enjoy dinner at the hotel this evening. (B, L, D)

**Day 7 Odessa.** Founded by Catherine the Great in 1794, following the Russian victory over the Turks, Odessa today is a popular resort. On our tour we will see the famous Primorsky Boulevard and the Potemkin Steps which rise to a height of almost 500 feet from the sea to the upper town. Also, see the acoustically perfect Opera House which is one of the most impressive buildings in Europe. Enjoy lunch in a local restaurant and this afternoon visit the Archaeological Museum. Established in 1875 it was the first museum of its kind in the former Russian Empire, housing jewellery and coins from early Black Sea civilisations. This evening attend a ballet or music performance at the Odessa National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet (subject to schedules and availability) followed by dinner in the hotel. (B, L, D)

**Day 8 Odessa Catacombs.** Today we visit the fascinating Odessa Catacombs. The sandstone on which Odessa stands is riddled with approximately 1000 kilometres of tunnels, quarried out for building in the 19th century. They have been used by smugglers, revolutionaries and World War II partisans. Our morning tour includes a visit to one of the network of tunnels in Nerubayske village on the north-west edge of Odessa, which sheltered a group of partisans during World War II and now has been turned into the Museum of Partisan Glory, also known as Catacombs. This afternoon and evening are at leisure to explore the city of Odessa. (B)

**Day 9 Purcari Winery & Chisinau, Moldova.** Leaving Ukraine this morning, we return to Chisinau and en-route visit the Purcari Winery where we can appreciate the local wines. Here, a unique micro-climate, the location of the vineyards on the south-western and south-eastern slopes, proximity to the Black Sea and closeness to the Nistru River provides ideal conditions

for the creation of high quality wines. Enjoy a tour of the cellars, the oldest in Moldova and unchanged since 1827, and a tasting before lunch at the winery. After our visit we continue our journey back to Chisinau where we will check in to the Radisson Blu Leograd Hotel for a two night stay. Spend the evening at leisure. (B, L)

**Day 10 Castel Mimi.** After breakfast we journey to Castel Mimi. Constantin Mimi was a pioneer, an emblematic wine maker and the last Governor of Bessarabia during the Russian Empire era. By applying the knowledge he acquired in Western Europe, Constantin Mimi built the first and only true Chateau in Moldova, and went on to produce some of the highest quality wines. We will explore the chateau and have a tasting before enjoying lunch at the vineyard. Return to the hotel this afternoon and enjoy some free time before meeting for our farewell dinner this evening in a local restaurant. (B, L, D)

**Day 11 Chisinau to London Stansted.** After breakfast we will check out of the hotel and transfer to the airport for our return scheduled flight to London Stansted. (B)

**PRICES PER PERSON**  
Based on double occupancy

Twin	£2995
Single	£3395

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

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**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights hotel accommodation in Chisinau and three nights hotel accommodation in Odessa • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine, beer and soft drinks with included meals • Excursions • Local guide • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Gratuities • Transfers.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

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**NB:** This tour will involve being on your feet for some long periods and traversing a number of cobblestoned streets and uneven paths.

# TREASURES OF THE VENETO

A seven night exploration of the Veneto staying at the Villa Michelangelo

29<sup>th</sup> May to 5<sup>th</sup> June & 18<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> September 2021



Situated in Italy's north-east, the Veneto region is famed for its historical, natural, artistic, cultural and culinary treasures which we will explore during this week long escorted tour planned for the delightful months of May and September.

We will be based just outside Vicenza in the Berici Hills at the Villa Michelangelo, a restored 18th century Palladian style villa which is now an elegant hotel. From our perfectly located hotel, we will enjoy daily, comprehensive sightseeing excursions discovering the many wonderful facets of the Veneto combined with ample time at leisure to relax and enjoy the hotel and its five hectares of grounds, meeting each evening for dinner.

We will visit the iconic cities of Venice and Verona; Mantua, the former ducal capital of the House of Gonzaga; Medieval Padua and beautiful Vicenza, renowned for the architecture of Andrea Palladio and of course no trip to the Veneto would be complete without a Prosecco tasting.



## THE ITINERARY

**Day 1 London to Venice, Italy.** Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the Villa Michelangelo situated in the Berici Hills on the outskirts of Vicenza. Settle into your room and enjoy the hotel facilities before meeting for our welcome dinner in the hotel this evening. (D)

**Day 2 Verona.** After breakfast we will transfer to Verona for a guided walking tour of this fascinating Medieval city. Points of interest during our tour will be Juliet's balcony and the Arena which holds 15,000 spectators and was completed in the year 30 AD. See examples of Romanesque architecture including the Porta Borsari, a third century gate in the original city walls, and some of the city's magnificent Romanesque basilicas. The Basilica of San Zeno Maggiore features a 72-metre-high bell tower and is mentioned by Dante in canto 18 of

the Purgatory in The Divine Comedy; San Zeno being the patron saint of Verona. After our tour there will be some free time to explore further and enjoy lunch independently before we return to the hotel this afternoon. We will meet this evening for dinner at a nearby restaurant. (B, D)

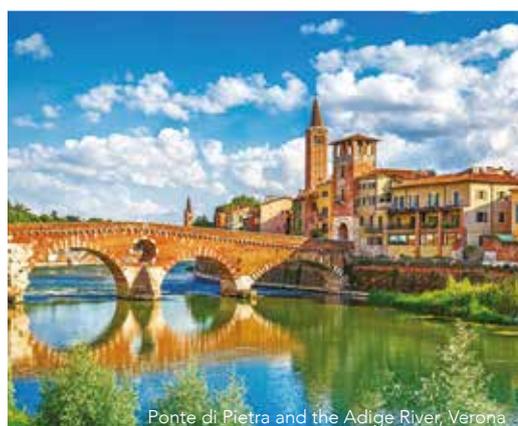
**Day 3 Venice.** Venice is unique, amazingly beautiful and casts its spell over all those who visit and no matter how many times you visit, that first glimpse of every trip is something special. We will arrive by boat this morning and our walking tour will include Saint Mark's Square, where you can admire the famous Basilica, the Doge's Palace, the Campanile, the historical buildings around the square and the clock tower before we continue to the Rialto Bridge. After the tour there will be free time for lunch and to explore at your own pace before we return to the hotel where we will have dinner this evening. (B, D)



The picturesque town of Asolo



Prato della Valle, Padua



Ponte di Pietra and the Adige River, Verona



Beiteddine Palace of Emir Bashir



Mantua Cathedral

**Day 4 Asolo & Prosecco.** Named by Giosuè Carducci the 'City of a Hundred Horizons', Asolo is one of the most picturesque old town centres in Italy. Contained within the ancient walls that branch off from the 12th century fortress, in every corner it preserves testimonies of its thousand-year old history. Asolo was a destination for poets, writers, artists and travellers that found inspiration and harmony here. Among them the English poet Robert Browning, the Divine theatre actress Eleonora Duse, the composer Gian Francesco Malipiero and the English writer and traveller Freya Stark. From Asolo we will drive into the Prosecco region where we will visit one of the vineyards for a tasting with local delicacies. Return to the hotel in the early afternoon for a relaxing afternoon before dinner this evening. **(B, D)**

**Day 5 Vicenza.** After a leisurely morning, we will leave for Vicenza, renowned for the architecture of Andrea Palladio. There will be free time for lunch in the city before we begin our walking tour including the Teatro Olimpico, the Basilica Palladiana and the most important monuments of the city. Afterwards we drive the short distance to see Palladio's Villa Almerico Capra, known as La Rotonda, with its wonderful gardens and Villa Valmarana. We will return to the hotel after dinner at a local restaurant. **(B, D)**

**Day 6 Mantua.** Mantua's historic power and influence under the Gonzaga family has made it one of the main artistic, cultural and musical hubs of Northern Italy and the country as a whole. Surrounded by lakes on three sides, Mantua is noted for its significant role in the history of opera; the city is also known for its architectural treasures and artefacts, elegant palaces, and the Medieval and Renaissance cityscape. On arrival we will board local boats to cruise on Lago Inferiore, where we can admire the stunningly beautiful town skyline. The town where the family Gonzaga was once in power reflects in the water creating a magical feeling. Continue to 'La Vallazza' where we see all the flora and fauna of this protected wetland known as the Mincio Natural Park. There will be free time for lunch in the city before a guided walk through the centro storico which was recently declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Return to the hotel this afternoon and meet for dinner tonight. **(B, D)**

**Day 7 Padua.** As a Medieval city-state and home to Italy's second-oldest university, Padua challenged both Venice and Verona for regional hegemony. This golden age is reflected in the architecture and cityscape. See the Piazza delle Erbe and Piazza dei Frutti, home to a daily produce market that has operated for centuries. Also see the famous palazzo, the Basilica of Sant'Antonio and the Prato della Valle, one of Padua's landmarks, a 90,000-square-metre elliptical square, the biggest in Italy and one of the largest in Europe. Located at the southern edge of the historical centre, it is a favourite gathering spot for the locals, who call it 'il Prato'. Enjoy free time for lunch or to explore further before we return to the hotel in the afternoon. After time to relax we will meet for our farewell dinner in the hotel. **(B, D)**

**Day 8 Venice to London.** After breakfast we will transfer to Venice for our scheduled flight to London. **(B)**

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

#### ROOM CATEGORY

Classic Double	£2695
Superior Double	£2845
Deluxe Double	£2995
Classic Double for sole use	£3195
Superior Double for sole use	£3395
Deluxe Double for sole use	£3595

Group Size: We are restricting the group size to just 25 participants.

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • Seven nights hotel accommodation at the Villa Michelangelo • Meals as indicated (B – Breakfast, L – Lunch, D – Dinner) • Wine with dinner • Excursions • Noble Caledonia Tour Manager • Local guide • Gratuities • Transfers.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# YOUR HOTEL – VILLA MICHELANGELO



Designed in the Palladian style, Villa Michelangelo was built in the 18th century as the country house of the aristocratic Tomi family of Vicenza. During the last century, the villa changed hands several times, but managed to retain its period charm with its original walnut beams, highly polished Venetian floor, as well as the manicured grounds. Due to its elevated position on the slopes of the Berici Hills the hotel offers stunning views of the surrounding countryside.

The hotel features a swimming pool with a retractable roof and sun-loungers offering views across the Berici Hills. Encircling the hotel, the five hectares of grounds form a captivating backdrop and are very much worth exploring, playing host as they do to ancient trees, an olive grove and a thick forest.

## Your Accommodation

The villa comprises of 52 rooms and each room is rustically styled with high beamed ceilings, antique furniture, polished Venetian flooring and marble bathrooms. All rooms include luxury bathroom amenities, hairdryers, air-conditioning, smart TV and safes. WiFi is available throughout the hotel and room service is available 24 hours a day. Classic Rooms measure 16m<sup>2</sup> with views of the lovely gardens below. The Superior Rooms are larger at 19m<sup>2</sup> with panoramic views of the extensive grounds and the Deluxe Rooms are the largest at 22m<sup>2</sup> and feature large windows and a seating area with armchairs and table.

## Your Dining

La Loggia Restaurant has the same ambience as the hotel, boasting large windows, refined rooms with fireplaces, marble floors, exposed beam ceilings and, above all, the same reputation for excellence, providing wonderful cuisine. In the masterful hands of the Chef, the restaurant brings together centuries of Venetian fine food and wine, offering a unique experience with an exclusive menu of creative contemporary dishes inspired by traditional recipes.



Classic Room



Deluxe Room



Lounge and Reception



Superior Room



Swimming Pool



La Loggia Restaurant



The Basilica, the Doge's Palace and the Campanile in Saint Mark's Square, Venice



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Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.

Cover image: Tuscany.