

SPECIAL
OFFER - SAVE
£500
PER PERSON

SECRETS OF MELANESIA

A voyage from Fiji to Cairns including Vanuatu,
the Solomon Islands and Papua New Guinea
aboard the MS Island Sky
4th to 25th May 2019

NOBLE CALEDONIA



Marovo Lagoon



Hibiscus, Solomon Islands



Victoria Crowned Pigeon

Travelling independently in Melanesia can be difficult, with little infrastructure in place to accommodate for tourists and information about getting around often scarce. This of course makes the region alluring to the genuine traveller who will encounter beautiful islands with unique features and customs that remain relatively unscathed by the modern world. The region is ideal for exploring by small ship, especially one as perfectly suited as the MS Island Sky.

For our unique exploration we begin in Fiji from where we head to the Vanuatu archipelago, home to rainforests bursting with a magnificent array of flora and fauna and a mesmerising underwater world of tropical fish and vibrant coral. From here our island hopping adventure continues to the Solomon Islands which were thrust on to the centre stage of world history when the Allied forces took the offensive in the South Pacific and air, land and sea battles ensued for their control. We will visit the outer islands of Vanikoro and Santa Ana before arriving in Honiara where we explore the war sites and head west to Tetepare and Morovo Lagoon. From these remote island paradises we will have the opportunity to visit tribal villages little changed for centuries, see astonishing ceremonial dances, enjoy nature walks inland or swim in the warm waters from isolated palm-fringed beaches.

Before arriving in Australia, the final part of our expedition takes us to Papua New Guinea, a land of striking natural beauty and a hybrid of diverse and unique cultures, with more than 1000 tribal groups, each with different traditions. The region possesses exotic wildlife, turquoise seas, tropical rainforest and steep sided volcanoes with breathtaking islands scattered to its east and north. In this land of contrasts we will witness an astonishing array of cultural ceremonies, enjoy fascinating underwater experiences and we hope to explore the beautiful D'Entrecasteaux Islands.

This voyage has something for everyone, whether your interest lies in natural history, military history, bird watching, the undersea world or simply just being one of the privileged few who are able to set foot on islands of astonishing richness and beauty. Afloat and ashore, our adventure will be filled with unforgettable images, remote idyllic islets, kaleidoscopic reefs and soaring white-tailed tropic birds. We hope you can join us in this faraway haven for an unparalleled opportunity to explore one of the most intriguing regions on the map.



The Itinerary

Days 1 & 2 London to Fiji. Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

Day 3 Fiji. Arrive this morning and transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is free to relax after our long journey.

Day 4 Fiji. Enjoy a relaxing morning at the hotel. After lunch we will transfer to the MS Island Sky moored in Lautoka and sail this evening.

Day 5 Yasawa Islands. This morning we will drop anchor amongst the twenty islands of the Yasawa group. In 1789 when Captain Bligh was set adrift from the HMS Bounty he passed by the Yasawa Islands from where two war canoes were sent to pursue them. They escaped and the waters are still known as Bligh Water. Today we can expect a friendlier welcome as we find a spot



Yasawa Islands



Exploring by Zodiac



Traditional dance, Solomon Islands

on a secluded beach to relax or enjoy a first opportunity to snorkel and swim. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy an afternoon at sea.

Day 6 At Sea. Join a lecture or find a spot on deck as we cruise towards Vanuatu.

Day 7 Tanna, Vanuatu. Our first call in Vanuatu is the island of Tanna, meaning earth in the local Kwamera language. Captain Cook was the first European to visit the island in 1774, landing at Port Resolution, having been attracted by the glowing light of Mount Yasur. This 361 metre active volcano is situated in the south east of the island and dominates the landscape. The more adventurous amongst us may wish to join a journey to the crater taking local trucks through the rainforest that covers the mountain before walking to the rim. Alternatively, we hope to have the chance to visit local villages where traditional lifestyles are maintained and the local culture has been largely unaffected by western influences. We will learn of the customs, traditional medicines, crafts and cooking styles.

Day 8 Port Havannah. Awake this morning off Port Havannah, situated on the north coast of Efate Island and our base for today's activities. There are a number of outer islands that we may be able to explore depending on weather and sea conditions. Lelepa Island is 160 acres of unspoilt tropical rainforest and palm fringed beaches. On a

nature walk we will see the herbs used in local medicines before exploring Feles cave, thought to be the resting place of the legendary Polynesian Chief, Roi Mata. Meanwhile on Moso Island we meet the volunteers at the Tasiriki Turtle Sanctuary who will teach us about the rehabilitation of the Hawksbill turtles and the attempts to increase their numbers. If time and weather permit, we will also set up a snorkelling platform or offer a chance to swim from the beach.

Day 9 Pentecost Island. Named after the day on which it was first sighted by Europeans, Pentecost is a mountainous, tropical island. There are no towns on Pentecost and many areas remain relatively untouched by Western influences, where local traditions are strong. The island is also the home of nanggol (land diving) - the original bungee jump - which is known throughout the world. The nanggol ceremony takes place between April and June to celebrate the first yam crop emerging and we hope to coincide our call with one of these events. From tall towers constructed of saplings and branches held together with forest vines, the men leap forward and down to touch the earth below. A good jump helps ensure a bountiful yam harvest.

Day 10 Espiritu Santo Island. Espiritu Santo is the largest of Vanuatu's islands with some of the most beautiful white sand beaches, amazing blue holes, caves and

renowned snorkelling. It was also a huge military base during World War II. This morning join an island tour including the Nekar Custom Village where we will learn about local traditions and customs, including their unique water music and cava making, before enjoying time to swim in the nearby Riri Blue Hole. Return to the ship for lunch and in the afternoon snorkel amongst the corals and fish of the region at Million Dollar Point, named after the value of the military equipment dumped into the sea.



Blue Hole, Espiritu Santo

Day 11 Mota Lava & Rah Island. Our final call in Vanuatu will be the island of Mota Lava and Rah Island in the Banks Island group. These tiny island communities are still off the main tourist routes but the locals are happy to share their culture, stories and ways of life with the visitors that make the journey to their islands. From our anchorage point we will Zodiac ashore and see a traditional snake dance where the men paint themselves black and white as sea snakes before being welcomed into the village. We also hope to have the chance to snorkel on the reef and enjoy nature walks

on the island.

Day 12 Vanikoro, Solomon Islands.

This morning we arrive in the Solomon Islands and the island of Vanikoro. Situated in the Temotu Province, Vanikoro was where French explorer Jean-Francois de la Perouse became stranded after both his vessels, La Boussole and the Astrolabe, hit the then unknown reefs of the island in 1788. Learn more about the island's history and the mystery of the lost La Perouse expedition that captured the imagination of the European public. We will be welcomed ashore by the local villagers before choosing to explore the village further, join a nature walk where we can look out for the endemic birds, the Vanikoro Monarch and Vanikoro White-eye, or enjoy a swim or snorkel from the beach. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and enjoy a relaxing afternoon at sea.

Day 13 Santa Ana. After a morning cruising, over lunch we anchor off Port Mary on Santa Ana Island. We will be welcomed with a stunning dance by the villagers with spears and mud face masks. After the performance we have the opportunity to explore the town further with its plethora of local handicrafts, join a nature walk through the forests, meet the students at the village school or swim from the local beach.

Day 14 Honiara. During World War II the British founded Honiara



Water taxi, Mota Lava



Coral reef



Moso Island, Vanuatu



Traditional land diving, Pentecost Island

as a military base. The town and Mataniko River, which runs through it, were the front for many months during the battle of Guadalcanal. Today, this is a bustling town with lovely hibiscus and palm tree lined avenues. After breakfast we will join a city tour of Honiara including the central market, parliament building and National Museum where we get an insight into the history of the Solomon Islands. Enjoy lunch before continuing to the World War II sites including Henderson Field, the Japanese Peace Park and the US Memorial at Skyline Ridge. This evening we will cruise through Iron Bottom Sound, the site of intense naval battles during World War II and so named for the large numbers of Japanese and American ships and aircraft that sank beneath the sea.

Day 15 Tetepare Island. Tetepare is the largest uninhabited tropical island in the Southern Hemisphere and home to one of the Solomon Islands leading conservation projects. Managed by the Tetepare Descendants Association, they have ensured the island was saved from the threat of loggers and many areas remain untouched. A wide variety of plants and animals live in the 120 square kilometres of lowland rainforest that blankets the island. A total of 76 bird species, 25 reptile and 13 mammal species have been recorded here including skinks, dugongs and the endemic Tetepare White Eye whilst the beaches support three species of

turtle including the endangered leatherback. Today we will enjoy guided walks in the rainforest with the local conservationists who will educate us on the work they are doing on the island.

Day 16 Marovo Lagoon. Marovo Lagoon is the largest double barrier lagoon in the world. Thousands of islands scatter the lagoon, from tiny coral islets on the fringing reef to massive 1600 metre volcanic islands. Inside the lagoon, the islands are surrounded by spectacular coral formations and white sand beaches, the lagoon waters shimmering in every shade of blue, turquoise and jade green. We have a full day here to explore the villages which produce some of the finest wood carvings in the region. We will also find a suitable spot to snorkel and swim from the beaches as well as enjoying nature walks in the local forests.

Day 17 At Sea. Enjoy a relaxing day at sea.

Days 18 & 19 Papua New Guinea. We have two days in the islands of this fascinating country. Our itinerary will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain and the local weather conditions but during our time here we hope to visit the the D'Entrecasteaux islands. We will use our Zodiacs to land on Fergusson Island, the largest of the chain, in a small fishing village. From here we will walk to the local hot springs and

bubbling mud pools surrounded by lush vegetation and birders can keep a lookout for parrots and cockatoos. A welcome dance will be accompanied by local foods cooked in the hot pools. We may cruise through the spectacular Dobu passage and use our Zodiacs to explore and snorkel or alternatively we will land to meet the villagers and visit the local church. On the island of Bonarua, in Milne Bay, we may go ashore to view fishing and weaving demonstrations and to wander through the enchanting village, sampling local delicacies. Birders will have the chance to trek into the thicket whilst the warm inviting waters of the Coral Sea offer a perfect chance to explore the underwater world. We may also

visit Alotau, the provincial capital. As the centre for Milne Bay many of the islanders come here to sell their wares and the vibrant local market is a trove of local artefacts including Trobriand carvings. We will have time to explore the town whilst our naturalists will lead walks to explore the surrounding rainforest.

Day 20 At Sea. Relax on board as we sail towards Australia.

Day 21 Cairns, Australia to London. Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

Day 22 London. Arrive this morning.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

| SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £500 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY | | | |
|--|-----------------------|----------------|---------------------|
| Deck | Suite Category | Brochure Price | Special Offer Price |
| Magellan | Standard Forward | £11995 | £11495 |
| Magellan | Standard | £12295 | £11795 |
| Columbus | Superior | £12595 | £12095 |
| Marco Polo | Premium | £12795 | £12295 |
| Marco Polo | Corner | £12995 | £12495 |
| Erikson | Deluxe Balcony | £13795 | £13295 |
| Explorer | Owners Balcony | £13995 | £13495 |
| Magellan | Standard for sole use | £15495 | £14995 |
| Columbus | Superior for sole use | £16495 | £15995 |

Price Includes: Economy class scheduled air travel, overnight hotel accommodation on bed and breakfast basis in Fiji, 17 nights aboard the MS Island Sky on a full board basis with house wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner, Noble Caledonia onboard team, shore excursions, gratuities, group transfers and port taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance, visas.



MS Island Sky

The much loved MS Island Sky is one of the finest small ships in the world. With a maximum passenger capacity of only 114, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Island Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks.



Standard Suite



Dining on deck



Lounge

On board there is a high ratio of crew to passengers. Our friendly crew of 75 are mainly Filipino and Eastern European and our Scandinavian captains are experienced mariners, having been in service aboard large 2000 plus passenger vessels and who now prefer a less frantic life aboard a small ship. If, like them and us, you prefer a more peaceful life at sea, you will find the MS Island Sky the perfect ship. When choosing the vessel for your next voyage of discovery, you can select a ship with endless entertainment and impersonal service or come with us where peace, high quality service and attention to detail are the order of the day.

There will be no organised entertainment, fancy dress, deck games or any of the usual big ship experiences. The atmosphere on board is more akin to a private yacht or country hotel. A little music in the lounge or bar after

dinner, informative port briefings and presentations from our expedition team and of course good food which may be enjoyed leisurely in the attractive dining room, all contribute to making any voyage aboard the MS Island Sky a memorable experience. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well run and exceedingly comfortable ship.

Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large lounge where daily briefings and talks will be provided throughout the voyage and an elegant bar where a pianist plays periodically throughout the day. The onboard library is the perfect place to relax with a book. Daily newspapers and magazines are placed in the library depending on local availability. Outside there is a rear sun deck, a bar and comfortable deck furniture for sun bathing or relaxing with a book. On the top deck there is a further observation and sun deck.



Deluxe Balcony Suite



Restaurant



Library

Your Dining

Another benefit of a small ship is the quality of the cuisine. With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the galley is able to provide delicious meals. Where possible and when it meets his high standards, the chef will obtain local produce in markets or buy the catch of the day from a passing fishing boat. In the main elegant dining room, breakfast is served buffet-style, with certain items cooked to order and lunch and dinner is à la carte. When weather permits, breakfast and a buffet-style lunch are also served on deck. To enhance your dining experience even further a selection of wines are included with lunch and dinner. Afternoon tea is served in the lounge and tea and coffee are available 24 hours.

of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views. Each affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring marble-topped vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television with inbuilt DVD/CD player and a telephone in each suite. Bottled water, Molton Brown toiletries, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, air-conditioning and heating.

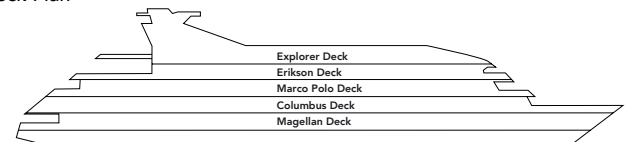


Exploring by Zodiac

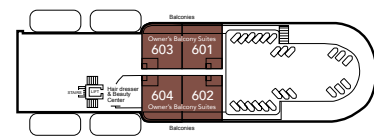
Your Suite

On board there are 57 exceptionally spacious and well designed suites. All feature a sitting room area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere

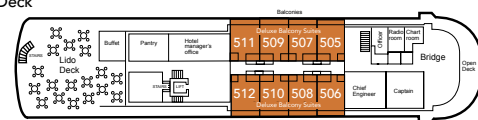
Deck Plan



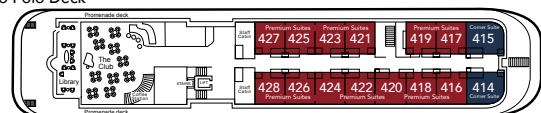
Explorer Deck



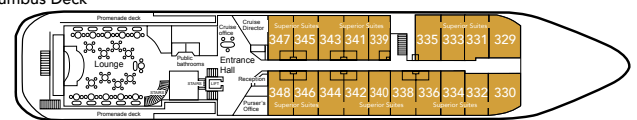
Erikson Deck



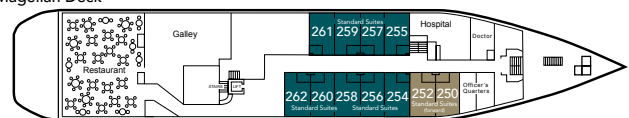
Marco Polo Deck



Columbus Deck



Magellan Deck



- Standard Suites (Forward)
- Premium Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Standard Suites
- Corner Suites
- Owner's Balcony Suites
- Superior Suites



This cruise visits out of the way destinations. You will be accompanied by an expedition team and some landings ashore will be made by Zodiac landing craft. Cruises such as this will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.

NOBLE CALEDONIA

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