

SPECIAL  
OFFER - SAVE  
**£300**  
PER PERSON

# TREASURES OF THE BLACK SEA

A CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF  
THE BLACK SEA ABOARD THE MS ISLAND SKY  
20<sup>TH</sup> AUGUST TO 1<sup>ST</sup> SEPTEMBER 2022



NOBLE CALEDONIA



Just what is it about the Black Sea region that intrigues travellers so much? It is undoubtedly a magnet for anyone who appreciates ancient history as the Black Sea itself has seen settlements on its shores for nearly 3000 years. Bordering six countries, it is also an area that has witnessed many empires and more than its fair share of wars and invasions, from the time of Herodotus to the fall of the Soviet Empire. In addition to its historical attractions, much of the appeal of this beguiling region stems from the fact that it remains still something of a hidden treasure and perfect for exploration by small ship.

Our circumnavigation of the Black Sea begins in Istanbul with a full day to explore this captivating city and from the Golden Horn our voyage follows the Turkish coast to Trabzon (Trebizond) before continuing to Georgia. Here the richness of its culture reflects the influence of Greeks, Byzantines, Persians, Turks and Mongols. Georgia's 'Golden Age' reached its height between the reigns of David the Builder and his granddaughter Queen Tamara in the 11th and 12th centuries. From Georgia we follow the coastline to Russia's premier resort and spa, Sochi where the microclimate produces wonderful year round weather and a lush countryside. During our time here we will visit Stalin's Dacha built in 1937 as his summer residence.

After a day at sea which will be filled with interesting lectures by our onboard Guest Speaker, we reach Odessa, the historic city founded by Catherine the Great at the mouth of the great River Dnieper where we have the benefit of an overnight stay allowing us to explore the fascinating city in some depth. We continue to Constanta, an ancient metropolis and Romania's largest seaport. Finally, we reach Nessebar, a delightful Bulgarian town with a captivating history before our cruise ends where it all began, in Istanbul, the city where East meets West.

Such a journey as this would be totally impractical by any means other than a cruise and we are indeed fortunate in having the MS *Island Sky* to explore the region's wealth of treasures. With just over 100 fellow, like-minded travellers joining you on board, we will explore in small groups and return each day to the comfort of our vessel before sailing on to the next intriguing port. Whether your interest lies in ancient or military history, architecture, literature, contemporary politics or just in visiting some of the most atmospheric and fascinating places on earth, the Black Sea has a lot to offer. Local guides and our onboard Guest Speaker will contribute greatly to our enjoyment and understanding of this intriguing corner of the world.

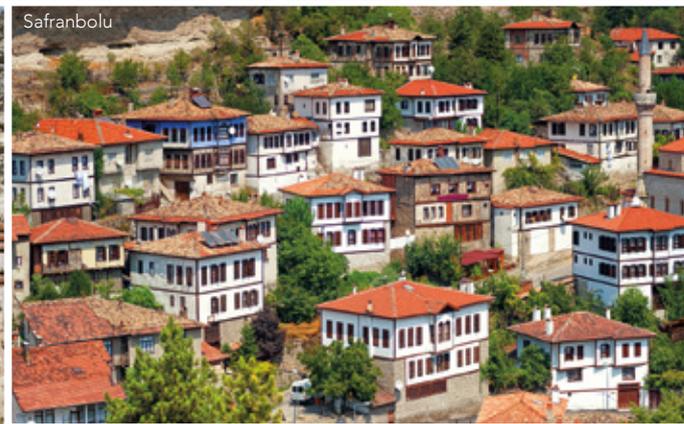


## GUEST SPEAKER



### Christopher Joll

After Oxford University and the RMA Sandhurst, Christopher spent six years as an officer in The Life Guards with whom he served four tours of duty in Northern Ireland. On leaving the Army, he worked for the next thirty-five years in the City. From his earliest days, Joll has written articles, features, short stories and reportage. In 2012 he wrote the text for *Uniquely British: A Year in the Life of the Household Cavalry*; with a Foreword by HM The Queen. Since 2018, Nine Elms Books have published his *The Drum Horse in the Fountain: Tales of the Heroes & Rogues in the Guards; Spoils of War: The Treasures, Trophies & Trivia of the British Empire; Black Ice*, the memoirs of the former soldier, double-amputee and World Para-bobsleigh champion, Corie Mapp; and *The Imperial Impresario: The Treasures, Trophies & Trivia of Napoleon's Theatre of Power*. He is also the author of the fifteen-volume military-historical/action-adventure series, *The Speedicut Saga*. Since leaving the Army in 1975, Joll has been involved in devising and managing charity fund-raising events and when not writing or directing 'military theatre', he is a video podcaster and a Trustee of The Art Fund Prize for Museums. He is also the Regimental Historian of the Household Cavalry.



## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London/Manchester to Istanbul, Turkey.** Fly by scheduled flight. On arrival transfer to the MS Island Sky and embark in the late afternoon. Moor overnight.

**Day 2 Istanbul.** We start our exploration of Istanbul at the Hippodrome, the centre of civic life in the capital of the Ottoman 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 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. Return to the ship for lunch and the afternoon is free to explore further at your own pace. Maybe visit the impressive Topkapi Palace or the vibrant Grand Bazaar.

**Day 3 Bartin.** From the port of Bartin in ancient Paphlagonia, we have a choice of excursions today. The morning tour will include a drive along the coast to nearby Amasra (ancient Sesamus) which is located on a headland in between two bays. We will explore the

attractive old town which was founded by the Milesians in the 6th century BC and later became an important possession of both Byzantium and Genoa. See the Genoese citadel and learn more about its Greek and Roman past. Alternatively join a full day tour to the UNESCO site of Safranbolu, a preserved Ottoman style town named for its prominence in saffron production. On a walking tour we will visit the marketplace, the streets where copper makers, iron makers and Turkish delight makers work, the Mosque and a Turkish Hammam all from the time of Suleiman the Magnificent. Our tour will end at a typical Safranbolu house which is now an ethnographical museum. Enjoy lunch in an Ottoman caravanserai before returning to the MS Island Sky and sailing this evening.

**Day 4 Sinop.** Founded by the Greeks in the 7th century BC, Sinop flourished as a Black Sea port on the caravan route. On a walking tour this morning we will discover this walled city including the 13th century Alaadin Mosque, constructed after the Seljuk conquest of the Sinop Province. The architecture is representative of the Seljuk period consisting of a rectangular plan featuring five domes. A fountain adorns the courtyard, which also contains ancient tombs. We will visit the Archaeological Museum of Sinop

with a collection of objects dating from the Hittite, Hellenistic, Phrygian, Roman and Byzantine periods and the Ethnography Museum located in a typical Ottoman House. Return to the MS Island Sky for lunch and enjoy a relaxing afternoon cruising.

**Day 5 Trabzon.** Trabzon is a gateway to Eastern Turkey and Iran which was founded in the 7th century BC. On our morning excursion we drive through the picturesque mountain scenery to Sumela to see the dramatic Byzantine monastery carved out of a sheer rock face in the Pontic Alps. After lunch on board we discover the church of Aya Sofia and the old town of Trabzon, then travel to the outskirts to visit Ataturk's lovely villa set high on a cliff above the city.

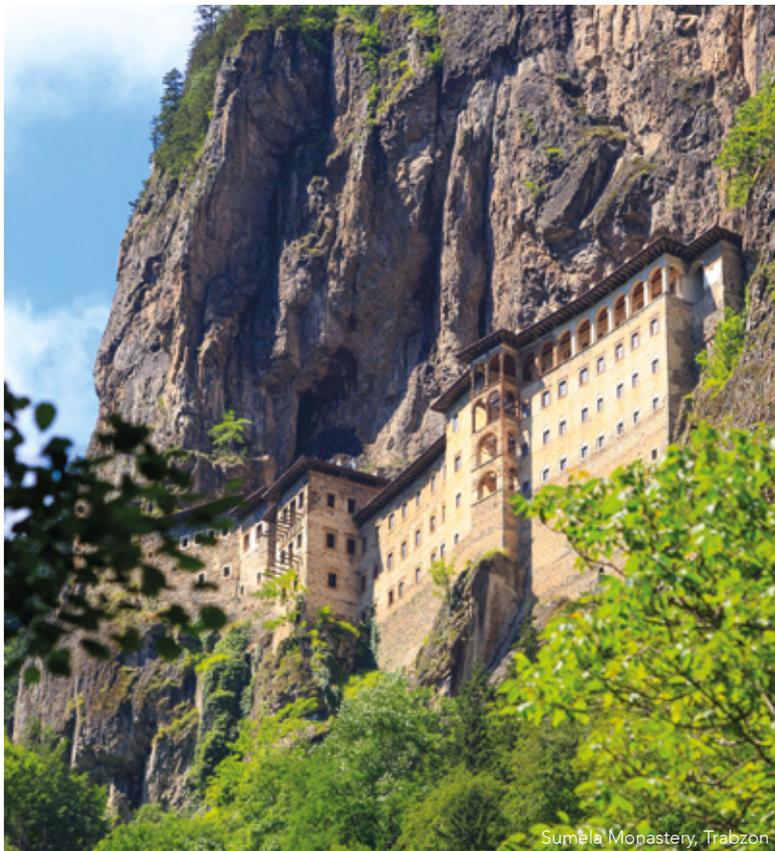
**Day 6 Batumi, Georgia.** Enjoy a day amongst the sights and sounds of charming Batumi. On a full day tour visit the ancient Gonio fortress dating back to the first century AD and the Ethnographic Museum that highlights the varied and fascinating history of the country. Continue to the impressive botanical garden 'Dendrium' and see the golden statue of Medea before heading to the bustling farmers' market. Lunch will be served in a local restaurant where we will also enjoy a truly exhilarating private performance of Georgian song

and dance by the Adjara State Assembly of Music and Dance.

**Day 7 Sochi, Russia.** We have a day to explore delightful Sochi, framed by the Caucasus Mountains and famous for its marvellous climate and health spas. On a morning tour we will visit Dagomy's tea plantation, the most northerly in the world where we learn about the cultivation processes and challenges before having the chance to enjoy a local brew. After lunch on board we will visit Stalin's Dacha, built in 1937 as his summer residence it remains intact as it was in Stalin's time.

**Day 8 At Sea.** Enjoy a day at sea as we cruise to Odessa. Maybe join one of the lectures or relax with a book in the library.

**Days 9 & 10 Odessa, Ukraine.** We have a day and a half to explore this fascinating city. Founded by Catherine the Great in 1794 following the Russian victory over the Turks, Odessa today is a busy port and popular resort. On our morning tour we will see the famous Potemkin Steps, Primorsky Boulevard and the Preobrazhensky Cathedral. Explore the city's Fine Arts Museum before returning to the ship for lunch. This afternoon is free to explore at leisure and we hope to enjoy a concert this evening at the acoustically perfect Opera House (details will be



Sumela Monastery, Trabzon



Istanbul



Batumi Botanical Gardens, Georgia

provided approximately 12 weeks prior to departure). Return to the ship and moor overnight. On our second day we recall Odessa's former splendour by visiting two of the city's many mansions. First visit the Tolstoy Mansion, built in 1832 in a Russian classical style, which belonged to Count Mikhail Tolstoy, a cousin of the famed Russian writer, Leo Tolstoy. After a short drive we will reach the Gagarin Mansion, designed by Otton in the middle of the 19th century for the nobleman, Prince Gagarin. This

now houses the Museum for Russian & Ukraine Literature. Tour the museum before enjoying a superb violin recital in the Golden Hall. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a relaxing afternoon at sea.

**Day 11 Constanta, Romania.** During breakfast we arrive in Constanta, known as Tomis to the Greeks but named Constanta by the Romans. Choose this morning to stay in Constanta and enjoy a tour to include the excellent Archaeological Museum and a

visit to the Treasury to see the gigantic 3rd century Roman Mosaic. Later, stretch your legs with a walk along the Black Sea waterfront promenade. Alternatively join a full day tour to Bucharest. We will explore the main sights of the city and see the boulevards with their decidedly French style. After lunch in a local restaurant we visit the Parliament Palace, the second largest administrative building in the world at 3.77 million square feet and renowned as former dictator Ceausescu's most infamous creation.

**Day 12 Nessebar, Bulgaria.** After a morning at sea we will arrive in the ancient town of Nessebar, a delightful place to spend an afternoon. A guided walk of the town will include the 5th century Bishopric, the 12th century St Stephen's Church and some of the traditional-style houses with their overhanging first floors above winding cobbled lanes.

**Day 13 Istanbul, Turkey to London/Manchester.** Disembark after breakfast and transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London or Manchester.



National Academic Theatre of Opera and Ballet, Odessa

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

### SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £300 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Magellan	Standard	£6095	£5795
Columbus	Superior	£6395	£6095
Marco Polo	Premium	£6895	£6595
Marco Polo	Corner	£7195	£6895
Erikson	Deluxe Balcony	£7795	£7495
Explorer	Owner's Balcony Suites	£8095	£7795
Explorer	Island Suite	£8995	£8695
Magellan	Standard for sole use	£7595	£7295
Columbus	Superior for sole use	£7895	£7595

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights aboard the MS Island Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer & soft drinks with lunch and dinner on board • Noble Caledonia onboard team including Guest Speaker • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Russian group visa • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# MS ISLAND SKY



Friendly Service



Deluxe Balcony Suite



The Restaurant

The much loved MS Island Sky is one of our two flag ships and sister vessel to the MS Hebridean Sky. Both vessels were built in the same shipyard in Italy at similar times and share the same excellent attributes that make them two of the finest small ships in the world. With a maximum passenger capacity of only 118, a vessel of her size is capable of carrying many more but instead the MS Island Sky has the benefit of unusually large suites, luxuriously appointed public areas and spacious outside decks.

## Your Suite

On board there are 59 exceptionally spacious and well-designed suites. All feature a seating area and some have private balconies, whilst those on the Marco Polo Deck feature tinted, sliding glass doors allowing greatly enhanced viewing opportunities and quick access to the deck. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and each suite affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring marble-topped vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, a large wardrobe, dressing table and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television with inbuilt DVD/CD player and a telephone in each suite. Refillable water bottles, dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a safe, hairdryer, assorted Molton Brown toiletries, air-conditioning and heating. The comfortable beds in each suite can be configured as either double or twin.

## Your Dining

With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the cuisine on board the MS Island Sky is of a consistent superior quality that befits such a vessel. In keeping with the informal atmosphere on board, when dining you are able to choose your seating arrangements and choice of restaurants at your leisure; whether that be joining a table of four to six other passengers in the elegant à la carte Restaurant or outside buffet-style on the Lido Deck in the evening sunshine. In the main Restaurant, breakfast is served buffet-style, with certain items cooked to order on request. Lunch and dinner menus offer plenty of choice, often reflecting the daily catch and local delicacies. The Welcome and Farewell dinners are a sumptuous five course affair. To enhance your dining experience further a selection of wines is included with both meals. Afternoon tea and pre-dinner canapés take place in either the comfort of the Lounge or out on the Lido Deck when the weather is favourable. Tea and coffee are also available 24 hours a day. Special diets can be catered for with sufficient notice.



Superior Suite



The Club



The Library

## Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large Lounge on the Columbus Deck featuring a selection of seating options from individual armchairs and sofas to side cushioned benches. Daily briefings given by the Cruise Director and talks from Guest Speakers and expedition staff take place in the Lounge. In addition to the main Lounge, there is also The Club, located on the Marco Polo Deck which features the main bar. The Club also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. Towards the aft of the ship on the Columbus Deck is the Library. Well stocked with reference books pertaining to the destinations the vessel is visiting and a selection of essential reads, you will not find yourself short of excellent literature on board. A collection of games as well as devices to access the internet via the ship's satellite can also be found in the Library. Access to the ship's satellite Wi-Fi via your own device is complimentary on board (*signal strength varies depending on location and demand*). The main Restaurant, which can seat all guests at one sitting, is located on the Magellan Deck, and outside there is a rear Lido Deck located on the Erikson Deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. Further to this on the top Explorer Deck there is an observation area ideal for spotting wildlife, complete with sun loungers for sunbathing, relaxing with a book or catching up with fellow travellers. The Promenade Deck wraps around the whole ship giving outstanding views. There is also a small beauty salon on board with appointments made on request.

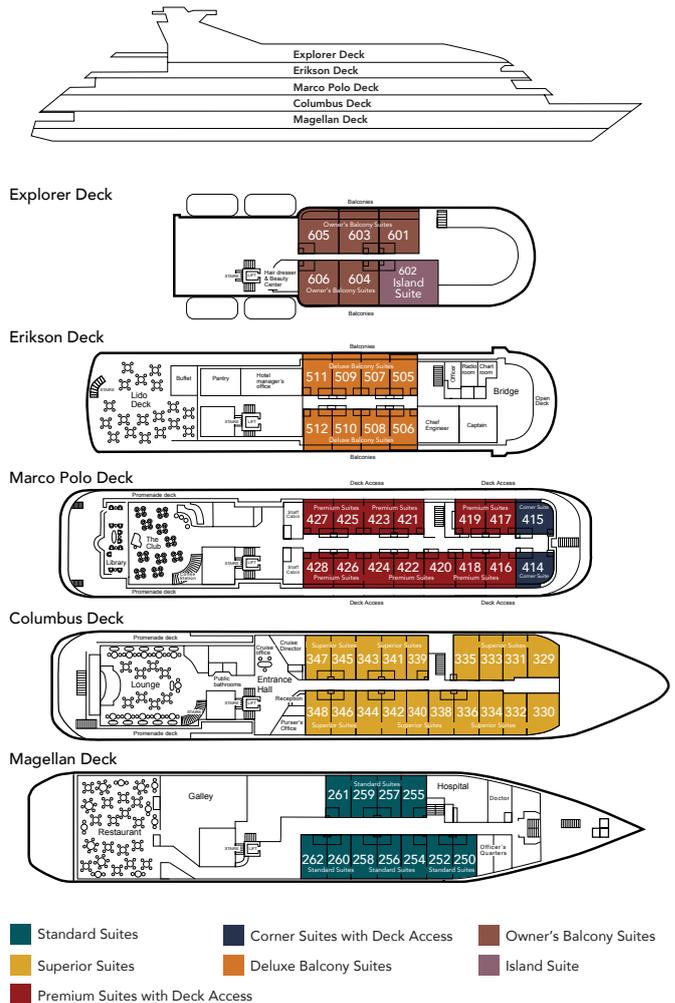
## Your Comfort

The MS Island Sky is equipped with the latest safety, navigation and communications equipment along with roll stabilisers to minimise the ship's motion. During your voyage we hope to offer you the opportunity to visit the Captain and Officers on the Bridge to check the vessel's progress by charts and learn more about your journey. On board you will also find a clinic and Doctor and a lift that serves all decks. When at anchor our nimble Zodiacs will ferry you ashore or, on select cruises, enjoy Zodiac cruises getting you closer to the natural world.

## Your Life On Board

The atmosphere on board is warm and convivial and more akin to a private yacht or country hotel in which you can learn more about wonderful destinations you are visiting in the company of like-minded people. There is a high ratio of crew to passengers and our friendly crew of 75 are mainly Filipino and Eastern European and our Captains are experienced mariners. After a day ashore you will return to the comfort and peace of a well-run and exceedingly comfortable ship where peace, high quality of service and attention to detail are the order of the day. A little music in the Lounge after dinner, Guest Speakers and informative port briefings and of course good food, all contribute to make any voyage aboard this wonderful vessel a memorable and joyful experience.

## MS ISLAND SKY DECK PLAN



# NOBLE CALEDONIA

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All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
 Cover image: Blue Mosque, Istanbul.