

*Voyages in the*  
**INDIAN OCEAN**

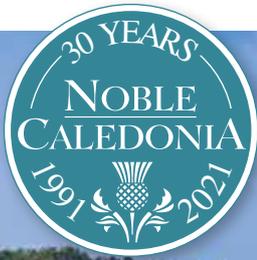
ABOARD THE MS HEBRIDEAN SKY  
NOVEMBER 2023 TO FEBRUARY 2024

NOBLE CALEDONIA

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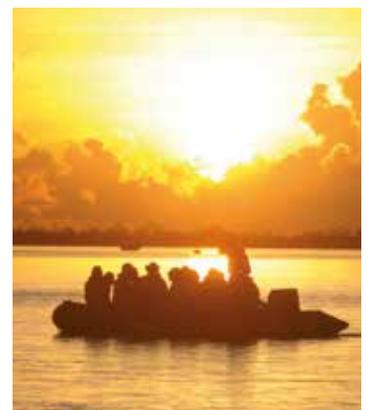
## DISCOVER THE WONDERS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN ABOARD THE MS HEBRIDEAN SKY

We are delighted to be able to confirm that the MS Hebridean Sky will be heading to the Indian Ocean for the winter of 2023 - 2024. Having operated vessels in the Indian Ocean for thirty years, we know the region well, as do our expert expedition team and if ever there was a region perfect for expedition cruising it is here, a timeless world of wonders both below and above the water.

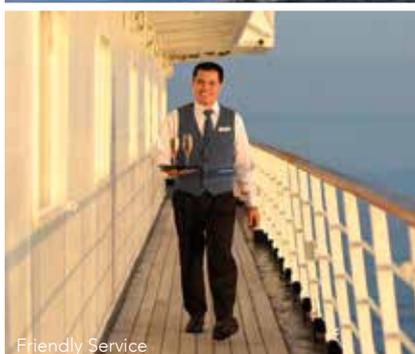
The all-suite MS Hebridean Sky is an ideally suited vessel for expedition cruising in the Indian Ocean, her size allowing us access to places larger vessels are unable to venture. In addition, with our fleet of Zodiac landing craft we are able to explore and land in otherwise inaccessible places. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by our expert crew and officers who along with our expedition team of marine biologists, ornithologists and botanists have many years of experience in the Indian Ocean.

Our itineraries represent a veritable feast of beauty and the natural world, from the unique flora and fauna of Madagascar to the enchanting, tropical scenery and magnificent bird life of the Seychelles. Obviously, such beauty and serenity is best enjoyed with a small number of travelling companions and with the MS Hebridean Sky, you have the luxury of travelling with just 100 or so fellow travellers. Your days will be spent exploring verdant rainforests and national parks on guided walks with our expedition team, swimming or snorkelling in the clear waters, visiting local villages or just relaxing on some of the beautiful beaches, each evening returning to our comfortable ship to rest and look forward to the next adventure.

We hope you can join us on board and discover for yourself the bounty of the islands including the wildlife from the lemurs and chameleons of Madagascar to the giant tortoises of Aldabra, the amazingly prolific birdlife and the mesmerising underwater world.



# MS HEBRIDEAN SKY



Friendly Service



Owner's Balcony Suite



The Restaurant

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

## Your Suite

On board there are 59 exceptionally spacious and well-designed suites. All feature a sitting area and some have private balconies. The feeling of luxury is enhanced by the wood panelling and brass, which predominates throughout the vessel conveying the atmosphere of a private yacht. The passenger accommodation is arranged over five decks and all suites have outside views with those on the Scott and Shackleton Decks featuring private balconies. Each suite affords considerable comfort with en-suite bathroom featuring vanity unit with sink and walk-in shower, large wardrobes, dressing table with large mirror and stool and excellent storage. There is a mini-fridge, flat screen television and a telephone in each suite. Refillable water bottles, towelling dressing gowns and slippers are also provided for your comfort. Other facilities include a programmable electronic safe, hairdryer, assorted Molton Brown toiletries and individually controlled air-conditioning and heating. Soft hues and blended tones enhance the traditional maritime style making the passenger accommodation an inviting and relaxing place to be.

## Your Dining

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



The Library



Superior Suite



The Club

### Your Space

The spacious and finely decorated public rooms include a large Lounge on the Byrd Deck featuring a selection of seating options from individual armchairs and sofas to side cushioned benches. Daily briefings given by the Cruise Director and talks from Guest Speakers and expedition staff take place in the Lounge. In addition to the main Lounge, there is also The Club, located on the Mawson Deck which features the main bar. The Club also features a 24-hour tea and coffee station. Towards the aft of the ship on the Mawson Deck is the Library. Well stocked with reference books pertaining to the destinations the vessel is visiting and a selection of essential reads, you will not find yourself short of excellent literature on board. A collection of games 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 Amundsen Deck, and outside there is a rear Lido Deck located on the Scott Deck where meals are served in warm weather under shade. Further to this on the top Shackleton Deck there is an observation area, complete with sun loungers for sunbathing, relaxing with a book or catching up with fellow travellers. The Promenade Deck wraps around the whole ship providing outstanding views. There is also a small beauty salon on board with appointments made on request.

### Your Comfort

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

### Your Life On Board

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



During these voyages you will be visiting out of the way destinations and will be accompanied by an expedition team. Landings and excursions will be made by Zodiac landing craft. This cruise will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.

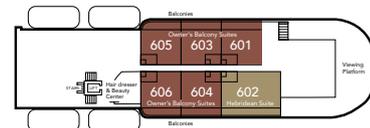


Alfresco Dining

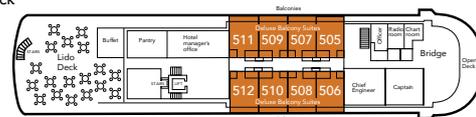
### MS HEBRIDEAN SKY DECK PLAN



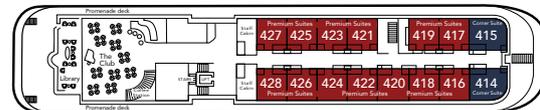
#### Shackleton Deck



#### Scott Deck



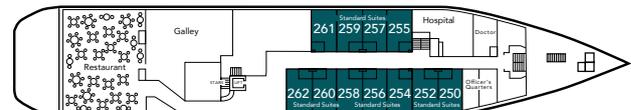
#### Mawson Deck



#### Byrd Deck



#### Amundsen Deck



- Standard Suites
- Corner Suites
- Owner's Balcony Suites
- Superior Suites
- Deluxe Balcony Suites
- Hebridean Suite
- Premium Suites

Please note that beds in each suite can be configured as double or twin with the exception of suites 601 and 602 which feature a fixed double bed.



# Indian Ocean Stepping Stones

An island hopping expedition from Mahe to Madagascar aboard the MS Hebridean Sky  
22<sup>nd</sup> November to 8<sup>th</sup> December 2023

Escape to warmer climes over the winter with a voyage aboard the MS Hebridean Sky in the wonderful Indian Ocean, discovering some of the most beautiful tropical islands on earth in the company of just over 100 fellow guests. Our journey includes some fascinating and exotic calls combining the stunning islands of the Seychelles including the magnificent Aldabra group of islands with the natural wonders of Madagascar.

The first part of our adventure is dedicated to the Seychelles and some of the most captivating islands in the world. Amongst the highlights of our time in the Seychelles will be the Aldabra Islands, the last breeding ground of the giant tortoise and in addition to seeing some of these endearing creatures we should also encounter dolphins, turtles and whales as well as countless birds including the flightless rail, the last flightless bird in the Indian Ocean. To explore the abundant crystal-clear waters of the vast lagoon and to set foot on atolls which have never been exploited by the hand of man is a rare experience.



Our voyage continues to Madagascar, the world's 'eighth continent', where we have a week to explore this extraordinary country that is still relatively unknown amongst even the most serious of travellers. The term 'unique' is often an overused description in the travel world but certainly applies to the island of Madagascar where the animals, plants, landscapes and people that make up this thousand-mile-long island are unlike anywhere else in the world. There is minimal infrastructure in many parts of the island and for those wishing to explore in some depth, doing so by small ship is far more preferable than by any other means.

This itinerary is a veritable feast of beauty and the natural world and with the vessel's fleet of Zodiac landing craft we can reach the unreachable, landing on remote beaches, walking through verdant rainforest and national parks and getting close to some unique flora and fauna. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by our expert crew and officers who, along with our expedition team of marine biologists, ornithologists and botanists have many years of experience in the Indian Ocean.

## What to Expect

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from previous expeditions which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.



Giant Tortoise, Aldabra

### Mahajanga & Ankarafantsika

**National Park, Madagascar:** This morning we were up bright eyed and bushy tailed in readiness for an exciting day. Women in traditional dress greeted us on the slipway and our transport waited at the end of a strip of market stalls selling local crafts. The convoy of minibuses departed Mahajanga driving through the busy streets before heading out in the countryside. Savannah like landscape could be seen for miles on either side of the tarmac road. The savannah gave way to large swathes of rice paddies. Local rice farmers were seen harvesting the rice, children waved from the roadside, as

we passed through beautiful villages. We arrived at the Ankarafantsika National Park, a mere two hours after leaving the dock. Immediately after arriving, we saw a troop of brown lemur and the gorgeous Coquerel's sifaka expertly negotiating their way through the canopy. Our guides took us on prepared trails through the dry forest, spotting a variety of bird species, reptiles, and of course, lemur. Highlights included an eye-height view of a paradise fly-catcher incubating on a nest; a female Milne-Edwards sportive lemur with her juvenile resting on a tree trunk, iguanas basking in a variety of different body positions in spots of sunlight and, the fantastic spot of the Madagascan fish eagle. Combined we saw 51 different species of bird and reptile, and five species of lemur. What an incredible day!

**Nosy Tanikley:** Instead of using the Zodiacs this morning, local boats ferried us to the shore of Nosy Tanikley, a small island rising steeply from the beautiful palm fringed beach on which we arrived. One highlight was being able to snorkel among the coral reef that was close to shore. The fish diversity of the relatively small reef was impressive and a friendly Hawksbill turtle swam by. The island was equally impressive. Walking up the concrete summit path was well worth it, and we were treated to an acrobatic display by a group of brown lemurs. The panoramic view from the lighthouse was stunning and only bettered by the white-tailed tropicbirds flying close by. Those that walked around the island were treated to seeing rufous and Madagascar flying fox flying but also sleeping in the shade.



Exploring by Zodiac



Lemur



Avenue des Baobabs



Aride Island Nature Reserve

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Mahe, Seychelles.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Mahe.** Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky in Port Victoria. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail tonight.

**Days 3 & 4 Inner Seychelles.** We have two days to explore the islands of the Inner Seychelles and hope to include a call at Praslin to explore the 'Vallee de Mai', the last remnant of the original high canopied Seychelles palm forest and home to the coco de mer. We will walk its paths looking out for the rare black parrot and enjoying its natural beauty. See Grande Soeur, an idyllic uninhabited island. Spend time walking the island trails which link the island's white sand beaches and maybe catch sight of some of the giant Aldabra tortoises or enjoy a snorkelling opportunity in the turquoise waters. We hope to anchor off Aride, one of the finest and most important seabird islands in the Indian Ocean. Over one million seabirds breed on the island including tropical shearwater, lesser noddy, frigatebirds and roseate tern and five of the species

are unique to the Seychelles such as the Seychelles warbler and Seychelles magpie robin. The island is largely covered in native woodland including the endemic wright's gardenia, a shrub with beautifully scented flowers found nowhere else in the world. Sail to Curieuse, a rugged island which was once home to a leper colony and now houses an eco-museum and visitor centre. The island is an important nesting site for hawksbill turtles and boasts endemic vine and mangroves which we explore on an island walk.

**Day 5 Alphonse Islands.** There are three islands in the Alphonse group which is located directly south of the Amirantes. As we approach the islands over lunch, you will understand why they are regarded by many to be the most beautiful of the 115 islands in the Seychelles archipelago. On the main island the circular lagoon offers good snorkelling and there are several tracks across the island for us to enjoy an afternoon of island walks.

**Day 6 At Sea.** Enjoy a relaxing day at sea as we head to the Outer Seychelles islands. Our lecture programme will continue

or maybe find a spot on deck to watch for wildlife.

**Days 7 & 8 Aldabra Islands.** We have two days at the Aldabra group of islands and our itinerary will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain who will monitor the local conditions to ensure we maximise our time here. Whilst our itinerary is flexible we will plan to call at the island of Assumption. The island was ruthlessly plundered for its vast deposits of guano in the early 20th century but peace has returned and the wildlife of rare birds and green turtles are once again in abundance. Our time here will be spent beachcombing, on a nature walk or snorkelling. We also plan time on Aldabra, the island referred to by Sir Julian Huxley as "One of nature's treasures and should belong to the whole world". Aldabra is unique and every time we call at what is believed to be the world's largest atoll we find something new of interest. Sightings have been made of the extremely rare white-throated rail and the atoll is also home to the world's second largest colony of frigate birds and the largest crab, the coconut crab. Whilst exploring by Zodiac it is difficult to know in

which direction to look. The clear blue seas abound with colourful life, the skies are alive with varied birdlife and ashore giant land tortoises forage as they have done for millions of years. We will explore Picard Island with a short walk to see some of the thousands of tortoises and numerous robber crabs. We will include as much as possible during our time on Aldabra making landings on South Island and trips into the lagoon, a vast 17 mile stretch of shallow clear water. From our Zodiacs we can watch the everchanging undersea world and snorkel in colourful coral waters teeming with marine life.

**Day 9 Diego Suarez, Madagascar.** After a morning at sea we arrive in Madagascar and enter dramatic Diego Suarez, a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. This afternoon choose from a city tour visiting the Commonwealth Cemetery and Place Joffre, or the Malagasy rainforest at the Mount Amber National Park. Dividing into short and long walk parties we will go in search of lemurs, chameleons and endemic birds as we explore the rainforest.



Nosy Hara

**Day 10 Nosy Hara.** As we cruise around the northern coast of Madagascar we will find a number of strangely shaped limestone islets that dot the aquamarine-coloured sea. The expedition team will decide on the most suitable island for landing, such as Nosy Hara with its abundant birdlife and great places to swim off the beach. We will spend the day exploring the island on foot, walking through dense woodland and observing the unusual vegetation. Alternatively, join a Zodiac cruise around the islands and a chance to snorkel over the coral.

**Day 11 Nosy Tanikely.** Spend the morning at the Nosy Tanikely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island which offers snorkelling opportunities and wonderful beaches. We will take the chance to either swim in the clear waters or snorkel over the corals keeping an eye out for reef fish, turtles and morays. Alternatively, our naturalists will lead guided walks on the island where we may see the resident lemurs, fruit bats and hermit crabs and enjoy fantastic views from the lighthouse on the island's highest point. We will sail in the early afternoon.

**Day 12 Mahajanga.** Mahajanga is a major port in northwest Madagascar situated on the Betsiboka River and is our base for a full day excursion to the Ankarafantsika National Park. This deciduous forest is a haven for birds, lemurs and reptiles and on a choice of walks, we will explore with our guides. Eight species of lemur have been observed here

including the famous Microcebus, the smallest primate in the world. Meanwhile over 120 species of birds nest here and we will keep an eye out for the Madagascan fish eagle and banded kestrel whilst the 44 species of reptile include chameleon, turtles and crocodiles that live in Lake Ravelobe. We will enjoy lunch in the park and in the afternoon there will be options to join further walks or watch for birdlife at the nearby lake before returning to the MS Hebridean Sky.

**Day 13 At Sea.** Our lecture programme resumes as we continue our journey around the Madagascan coast.

**Day 14 Morondava.** From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, we will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach and from here there will be a choice of excursions to explore the local region. On a half day morning tour we will visit the Avenue des Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the world, six are endemic to Madagascar and here we will see the Adansonia grandidieri species with a row of 20 to 25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before returning to Morondava and exploring the local market. Alternatively, join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest. Situated approximately a two hour drive from Morondava, we will pass the Avenue des Baobabs as we travel north. Kirindy is a 10,000 hectare, dry deciduous forest, one of the most endangered in the world where the flora and fauna

includes many endemic species. Here we find three species of baobab, many birds and reptiles including snakes, tortoises and lizards. Eight species of lemur reside here including the pale form marked lemur.

**Day 15 Tulear.** We arrive in Tulear at lunchtime. This afternoon choose to visit the Antsokay Arboretum which is entirely devoted to the conservation of the plants from the south west of Madagascar and, after more than 30 years of hard work, offers a densely kept selection of flora presenting a typical sub-arid thicket with baobab trees towering over the smaller plants. We will see the four hectare botanical garden which comprises over 900 species of plants of which 90% are

endemic to the region. Alternatively, visit the Reniala Private Reserve, a small area of just 60 hectares but containing a spiny forest which is unique to south eastern Madagascar. The park is home to 200 plant species including baobabs as well as being a haven for birders with sightings of paradise flycatchers, Madagascar hoopoe and Madagascar crested drongo.

**Day 16 Tulear to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our specially chartered flight to Johannesburg. Connect here with our onward scheduled flight to London.

**Day 17 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
Amundsen	Standard	£10495	£9995
Byrd	Superior	£10795	£10295
Mawson	Premium	£10995	£10495
Mawson	Corner	£11395	£10895
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£12395	£11895
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£12895	£12395
Shackleton	Hebridean	£13895	£13395
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£13495	£12995
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£14095	£13595

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel from London to Mahe and from Johannesburg to London • Specially chartered flight from Tulear to Johannesburg • 14 nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch & dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance, Madagascar visa.





# Madagascar – The Eighth Continent

A circumnavigation of Madagascar aboard the MS Hebridean Sky  
18<sup>th</sup> December 2023 to 6<sup>th</sup> January 2024 & 4<sup>th</sup> to 23<sup>rd</sup> January 2024

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

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

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



## What to Expect

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from previous expeditions which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

**Mahajanga & Ankarafantsika National Park:** No such thing as a Sunday lie-in this morning as we were up bright eyed and bushy tailed in readiness for an exciting day. The sea was a millpond. Women in traditional dress greeted us on the slipway and our transport waited at the end of a strip of market stall selling local crafts. The convoy of minibuses departed Mahajanga driving through the busy streets before heading out in the countryside. Savannah like landscape could be seen for miles on either side of the tarmac road. The savannah gave way to large swathes of rice paddies. Local rice farmers were seen harvesting the rice, children waved from the roadside, as we passed through beautiful villages. We arrived at the Ankarafantsika National Park, a mere two hours after leaving the dock. Immediately after arriving, we saw a troop of brown lemur and the gorgeous Coquerel's sifaka expertly negotiating their way through the canopy. Already we could see this was a special place and we had not even left the car park! We were on the lookout for creatures great and small, and we found them. Our guides took us on prepared trails through the dry forest, spotting a variety of bird species, reptiles, and of course, lemur. Highlights included an eye-height view of a paradise fly-catcher incubating on a nest; a female Milne-Edwards sportive lemur with her juvenile resting on a tree trunk, iguanas basking in a variety of different body positions in spots of sunlight and, the fantastic spot of the Madagascan fish eagle. Combined we saw 51 different species of bird and reptile, and five species of lemur. What an incredible day!

**Nosy Mangabe:** This morning we were anchored off the Masoala Peninsula which is covered in primary rainforest. Our destination Nosy Mangabe is a small island in the national park. We disembarked the long

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





Waterfalls, Reunion Island



Broad-billed Roller



Baobab Tree



Nosy Hara



Masoala National Park

## The Itinerary

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

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

**Day 3 Reunion Island.** We arrive at breakfast in Reunion where we have a choice of excursions. On a full day tour we will visit the central highlands where spectacularly rugged peaks of dormant or extinct volcanoes cradle huge amphitheatres known as cirques, where mountains tower to over 10,000 feet and beautiful waterfalls plummet hundreds of feet. The rich soil and mellow climate produce a lush and verdant landscape which is dotted with villages and towns with a uniquely French atmosphere. Fields of sugar cane and plantations of tropical fruits, vanilla and all manner of spices perfume the air. We will enjoy views from the Nez des Bouefs and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant we will visit the 'Cite du Volcan' museum. Alternatively enjoy a morning tour to a vanilla plantation in St Andre where we learn about the history and culture of this integral part of Reunion's heritage.

Continue to Salazie, a verdant landscape and home to many waterfalls including the 'Voile de la Mariee' before spending some free time in St Denis on the way back to the ship. This afternoon is at leisure before we set sail this evening.

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

**Days 5 & 6 Taolagnaro, Madagascar.** Our first call in Madagascar is the southeastern port of Taolagnaro, also known as Fort Dauphin. This was the first French settlement in Madagascar, situated on a peninsula overlooked by the Anosy mountains. We will moor overnight and during our afternoon and morning here we will offer a choice of excursions including the Nahampoana Private Park. The reserve is only 67 hectares but home to four species of lemur including ring-tailed and sifakas whilst the gardens showcase Madagascan plants with three-cornered palms and spiny *Desiderata* trees. A tour of Taolagnaro will include the market, public gardens and the Fort Flacourt Museum where we will learn about the arrival of the Magalasy people to Madagascar and the historical links with Reunion. Also enjoy walks in the forest at the Madena Conservation Zone, a 200 hectare

park protected from the region's mining industry and where we hope to see bamboo lemur and different varieties of orchids.

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

**Day 8 Andavadoaka & Nosy Hao.** The vessel will anchor this morning off the small fishing community of Andavadoaka, home to the Vezo

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

**Day 9 Morondava.** From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, we will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach. From here there will be a choice of excursions to explore the local region. A half day morning tour will visit the Avenue des Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the world, six are endemic to Madagascar and here we will see the *Adansonia grandidieri* species with a row of 20 to 25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before returning to Morondava and exploring the local market. Alternatively, join a full day excursion to Kirindy Forest. Situated approximately a two hour drive from Morondava, we will pass the Avenue des Baobabs as we travel north. Kirindy is a 10,000 hectare, dry deciduous forest, one of the most

endangered in the world where the flora and fauna includes many endemic species. Here we find three species of baobab, many birds and reptiles including snakes, tortoises and lizards. Eight species of lemur reside here including the pale form marked lemur.

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

**Day 11 Mahajanga.** Mahajanga is a major port in northwest Madagascar situated on the Betsiboka River and is our base for a full day excursion to Ankarafantsika National Park. This deciduous forest is a haven for birds, lemurs and reptiles and on a choice of walks, we will explore with our guides. Eight species of lemur have been observed here including the famous Microcebus, the smallest primate in the world. Meanwhile over 120 species of birds nest here and we will keep an eye out for the Madagascan fish eagle and banded kestrel whilst the 44 species of reptile include chameleon, turtles and crocodiles that live in Lake Ravelobe. We will enjoy lunch in the park and in the afternoon there will be options to join further walks or watch for birdlife at the nearby lake before returning to the MS Hebridean Sky.

**Day 12 Nosy Tanikely.** We arrive mid-morning at the Nosy Tanikely Island Marine Reserve, an uninhabited island which offers snorkelling opportunities and wonderful beaches. We will take the chance to either swim in the clear waters or snorkel over the corals keeping an eye out for reef fish, turtles and morays. Alternatively our naturalists will lead guided walks on the island where we may see the resident lemurs, fruit bats and hermit crabs and enjoy fantastic views from the lighthouse on the island's highest point.

**Day 13 Nosy Hara.** As we continue our journey along the western coast of Madagascar we will find a number of strangely shaped limestone islets that dot the aquamarine-coloured sea. The expedition team will decide on the most suitable island for landing, such as Nosy Hara with its abundant birdlife and great places to swim off the beach. We will spend the day exploring the island on foot, walking through dense woodland and observing the unusual vegetation. Alternatively join a Zodiac cruise

around the islands and a chance to snorkel over the coral.

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

**Days 15 & 16 Nosy Mangabe & Masoala National Park.** We will spend a day and a half exploring from our anchorage in Antongil Bay. We discover Nosy Mangabe, a 520-hectare island reserve and one of the most diverse areas of virgin rainforest in Madagascar which has also been an important research centre since the mid-1960s when several aye-ayes and lemurs were released into the forest. We will use our Zodiacs to land on the beach next to the forest and organise a series of nature walks looking at the varied trees, plants and ferns and we hope to spot chameleon, lizards and black and white ruffed lemur. For the birders, we will keep an eye out for Madagascar buzzard, kingfisher and paradise flycatchers. We will also explore Madagascar's largest protected area, the Masoala National Park, which comprises of coastal rainforest, flooded forests, marsh and mangroves. Mammal species encountered include the red-ruffed lemur, the red-fronted brown lemur and the ring-tailed mongoose. The park is also home to various species of brightly coloured mantella frogs, all manner of extraordinary chameleons and is a refuge of the endangered Madagascar red-owl, Madagascar serpent eagle and many endemic bird species. A series of walks for all levels will operate whilst there will also be the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

**Day 17 Toamasina.** Our final call in Madagascar is Toamasina, the country's main port and second largest city as well as the gateway to the Pangalanes Canals, a series



Panther Chameleon

of rivers, waterways and lakes that extend for over 400 miles down the island's east coast. Used mainly for transportation and fishing, the canals are also home to unspoiled beaches, lagoons and lakes whilst providing access to national parks and private reserves. This morning we will take a local boat cruise through the canal to enjoy the scenery followed by a nature walk in one of the private reserves. Enjoy lunch in the reserve before returning to Toamasina this afternoon. Alternatively visit the Ivoloina Zoological Parc, a 282 hectare property combining a small zoo where we will see up to 12 species of lemur as well as indigenous tortoises and chameleons.

Meanwhile in the surrounding forests we can see wild lemurs or malachite kingfishers on one of the many walking trails.

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

**Day 19 Mauritius to London.** Disembark this morning and enjoy a morning tour of Mauritius including the Trou-aux-Cerfs Volcano, the Grand Bassin Lake and Black River Gorges. After lunch we transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

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

## PRICES PER PERSON

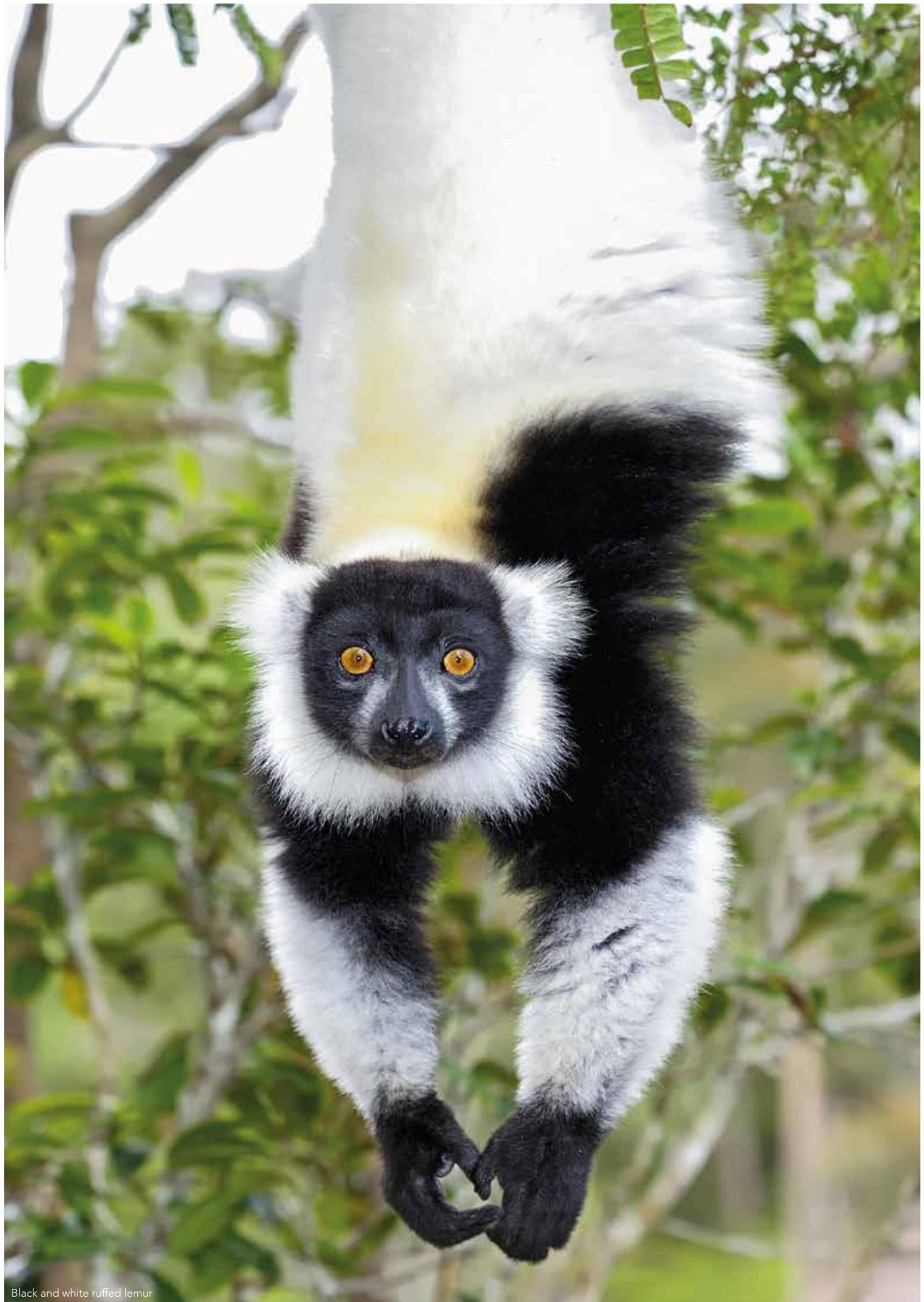
Based on double occupancy

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Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Amundsen	Standard	£10795	£10295
Byrd	Superior	£11095	£10595
Mawson	Premium	£11295	£10795
Mawson	Corner	£11695	£11195
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£12695	£12195
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£13195	£12695
Shackleton	Hebridean	£14195	£13695
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£13795	£13295
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£14395	£13895

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

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



Black and white ruffed lemur

# Islands of the Indian Ocean



A voyage from Mauritius exploring Madagascar, the Seychelles & Tanzania aboard the MS Hebridean Sky

21<sup>st</sup> January to 6<sup>th</sup> February 2024

Here is an extraordinary cruise for those who enjoy the natural world and all its wonders and are looking for the opportunity to escape the British winter. Join us aboard the all-suite MS Hebridean Sky and enjoy the warmth and beauty of the Indian Ocean as she undertakes exactly the type of itinerary that suits her many talents best. With the vessel's purpose built Zodiacs we will land on otherwise inaccessible beaches, explore vast lagoons and coral reefs and encounter some of the most extraordinarily beautiful tropical scenery to be found anywhere in the world.

Sailing from Mauritius we will land on its nearest neighbour, Reunion, a little bit of France in the Indian Ocean and a stunning place to spend a day. We will discover the island's truly awesome and dramatic scenery before we continue to Madagascar for four days of exploration of this incredibly verdant and beautiful island with its unique flora and fauna. Continuing to the Seychelles we have three days scheduled in the Aldabra Island group. Being one of the most difficult places in the world to access and having a lack of freshwater has saved Aldabra from any tourism development and there is no landing strip so the only viable means of reaching this untouched region is by ship. Aldabra is the last breeding ground of the giant tortoise and in addition to seeing some of these endearing creatures you should also encounter dolphins, turtles and whales as well as countless birds including the flightless rail, the last flightless bird in the Indian Ocean. Our expedition concludes in Tanzania where we visit Kilwa Kisiwani, a site of exceptional historical interest, followed by a full day in atmospheric Zanzibar.



This expedition really is a veritable feast of beauty, the natural world and island culture. You will witness the bounty of the islands, the wildlife from the giant tortoises of Aldabra to the lemurs of Madagascar and an amazingly prolific birdlife.

## What to Expect

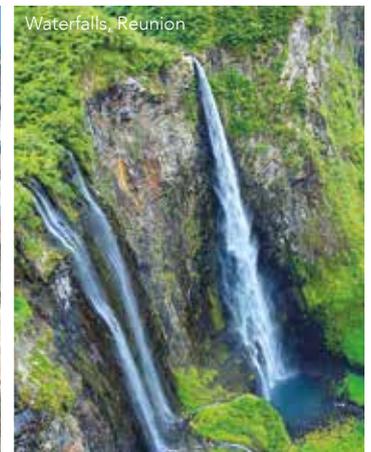
Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from previous expeditions which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

**Masoala National Park & Nosy Mangabe:** This morning we were anchored off the Masoala Peninsula and our destination, Nosy Mangabe, is a small island in the national park. We disembarked on a beautiful golden beach backed by primary rainforest and once ashore we split into our various groups and headed off into the forest in search of wildlife.

*The lemurs appeared, racing through the treetops and there were frogs everywhere. There were the green-backed mantellas, quite brash in their black and green colours, tiny nondescript frogs laying their single egg in the stumps of bamboo. There were a number of leaf-tailed geckos which were so well camouflaged that they were almost impossible to see even at close range. Near the landing site, the lemur came down to check us out and allowed for some great close up photographs. On walks inland we saw some huge boulders of 3.2 billion year old granodiorite that formed akin to how tors formed in the UK. This afternoon we had the opportunity to land here again for an afternoon exploratory walk or to enjoy a long Zodiac cruise along the peninsula.*



Stone Town, Zanzibar



Waterfalls, Reunion



Giant Tortoise, Aldabra



Boobie, Aldabra



Turtle



Mantella Frog, Nosy Mangabe



Exploring by Zodiac

## The Itinerary

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

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

**Day 3 Reunion Island.** We arrive at breakfast in Reunion where we have a choice of excursions. On a full day tour we will visit the central highlands where spectacularly rugged peaks of dormant or extinct volcanoes cradle huge amphitheatres known as cirques, where mountains tower to over 10,000 feet and beautiful waterfalls plummet hundreds of feet. The rich soil and mellow climate produce a lush and verdant landscape which is dotted with villages and towns with a uniquely French atmosphere. Fields of sugar cane and plantations of tropical fruits, vanilla and all manner of spices perfume the air. We will enjoy views from the Nez des Bouefs and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant we will visit the 'Cite du Volcan' museum. Alternatively enjoy a morning tour to a vanilla plantation in St Andre where we learn about the history

and culture of this integral part of Reunion's heritage. Continue to Salazie, a verdant landscape and home to many waterfalls including the 'Voile de la Mariee' before spending some free time in St Denis on the way back to the ship. This afternoon is at leisure before we set sail this evening.

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

**Day 5 Toamasina, Madagascar.** Our first call in Madagascar is Toamasina, the country's main port and second largest city as well as the gateway to the Pangalanes Canals, a series of rivers, waterways and lakes that extend for over 400 miles down the island's east coast. Used mainly for transportation and fishing, the canals are also home to unspoiled beaches, lagoons and lakes whilst providing access to national parks and private reserves. This morning we will take a local boat cruise through the canal to enjoy the scenery followed by a nature walk in one of the private reserves. Enjoy lunch in the reserve before returning to Toamasina this afternoon. Alternatively visit the Ivoloina Zoological Parc, a 282 hectare property combining a small zoo where we will see

up to 12 species of lemur as well as indigenous tortoises and chameleons. Meanwhile in the surrounding forests we can see wild lemurs or malachite kingfishers on one of the many walking trails.

**Days 6 & 7 Masoala National Park & Nosy Mangabe.** We will spend a day and a half exploring from our anchorage in Antongil Bay. We discover Nosy Mangabe, a 520-hectare island reserve and one of the most diverse areas of virgin rainforest in Madagascar which has also been an important research centre since the mid-1960s when several aye-ayes and lemurs were released into the forest. We will use our Zodiacs to land on the beach next to the forest and organise a series of nature walks looking at the varied trees, plants and ferns and we hope to spot chameleon, lizards and black and white ruffed lemur. For the birders, we will keep an eye out for Madagascar buzzard, kingfisher and paradise flycatchers. We will also explore Madagascar's largest protected area, the Masoala National Park, which comprises of coastal rainforest, flooded forests, marsh and mangroves. Mammal species encountered include the red-ruffed lemur, the red-fronted brown lemur and the

ring-tailed mongoose. The park is also home to various species of brightly coloured mantella frogs, all manner of extraordinary chameleons and is a refuge of the endangered Madagascar red-owl, Madagascar serpent eagle and many endemic bird species. A series of walks for all levels will operate whilst there will also be the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

**Day 8 Diego Suarez.** This afternoon we will enter dramatic Diego Suarez, a stunning natural harbour with a cosmopolitan mix of inhabitants including Creoles, Indians, Chinese, Comorans and Arabs. Choose from a city tour visiting the Commonwealth Cemetery and Place Joffre, or a visit to the Malagasy rainforest at the Mount Amber National Park. Dividing into short and long walk parties we will go in search of lemurs and chameleons as we explore the rainforest. In the towering vegetation, we may spot several species of lemurs and chameleons as well as endemic birds, including parrots.

**Day 9 Farquhar Group, Seychelles.** Arriving in the Seychelles this morning, we will anchor off Farquhar where we will use our Zodiacs to explore the sparkling lagoon of this remote



atoll ringed island of coconut and casuarina trees. Hawksbill and green sea turtles come to the atoll to nest and several of the Farquhar Group's islands are Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas. The island is a haven providing us with a delightful morning of bird watching or snorkelling. Return to the ship for lunch and an afternoon cruising.

**Days 10 to 12 Aldabra Islands.** We have three days to enjoy the Aldabra group of islands and our itinerary will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain who will monitor the local conditions to ensure we maximise our time here. Whilst our itinerary is flexible, we hope to call at the island of Assumption which was ruthlessly plundered for its vast deposits of guano in the early 20th century. Happily, peace has returned, and the wildlife of rare birds and green turtles are once again in abundance. Our time here will be spent beachcombing, on nature walks or snorkelling. We also hope to reach Cosmoledo where a huge ring of twelve islands circle a lagoon. Many of the atolls are still to be surveyed and we will explore some of them by Zodiac. This is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area with all three species of booby found in the Seychelles including the last breeding site for the brown booby. Also spot sooty terns and great frigate birds. We will also spend time on Aldabra, the island referred to by Sir Julius Huxley as "One of nature's

treasures and should belong to the whole world". Aldabra is unique and every time we call at what is believed to be the world's largest atoll we find something new of interest. Sightings have been made of the extremely rare white throated rail and the atoll is also home to the world's second largest colony of frigate birds and to the largest crab, the coconut crab. Whilst exploring by Zodiac it is difficult to know in which direction to look. The clear blue seas abound with life, the skies are alive with varied birdlife and ashore giant land tortoises forage as they have done for millions of years. We hope to explore Picard Island with a short walk to see some of the numerous tortoises and robber crabs or swim in the lagoon, a vast 17 mile stretch of shallow clear water. From our Zodiacs we can watch the ever-changing undersea world and snorkel in colourful coral waters.

**Day 13 At Sea.** Enjoy the day at sea as we continue our journey north.

**Day 14 Kilwa Kisiwani, Tanzania.** This morning we anchor off Kilwa Kisiwani, a site of exceptional historical interest, where the atmospheric ruins represent a wide sweep of East African coastal history, from the heights of the Swahili and Shirazi trading civilisation to the darker days of slavery and the uprisings against German rule. Once one of Africa's wealthiest towns, Kilwa Kisiwani is now a UNESCO World Heritage

Site and contains the world's most extensive and best-preserved Swahili ruins. We will spend the morning on a walking tour and see the prominent fort and the Great Mosque which stood at the heart of this ancient city which was once the largest in East Africa. This afternoon we set sail for Zanzibar.

**Day 15 Zanzibar.** Zanzibar's harbour, crowded with dhows, very much sets the scene for our visit to this Arab-style city with its long narrow streets, bazaars, houses with overhanging balconies and intricately carved doorways. On a morning walking tour, soak up the timeless atmosphere of Stone Town

including Livingstone House, Sultan's Palace, the slave market and the Old Fort. The afternoon is free to relax and explore independently or join a tour to a spice farm to experience the various fruits and spices cultivated on the island. Alternatively, travel to Jozani Forest which sustains a variety of wildlife and birds, including the rare red colobus monkey, indigenous to the island.

**Day 16 Dar es Salaam to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

**Day 17 London.** Arrive this morning.

## PRICES PER PERSON

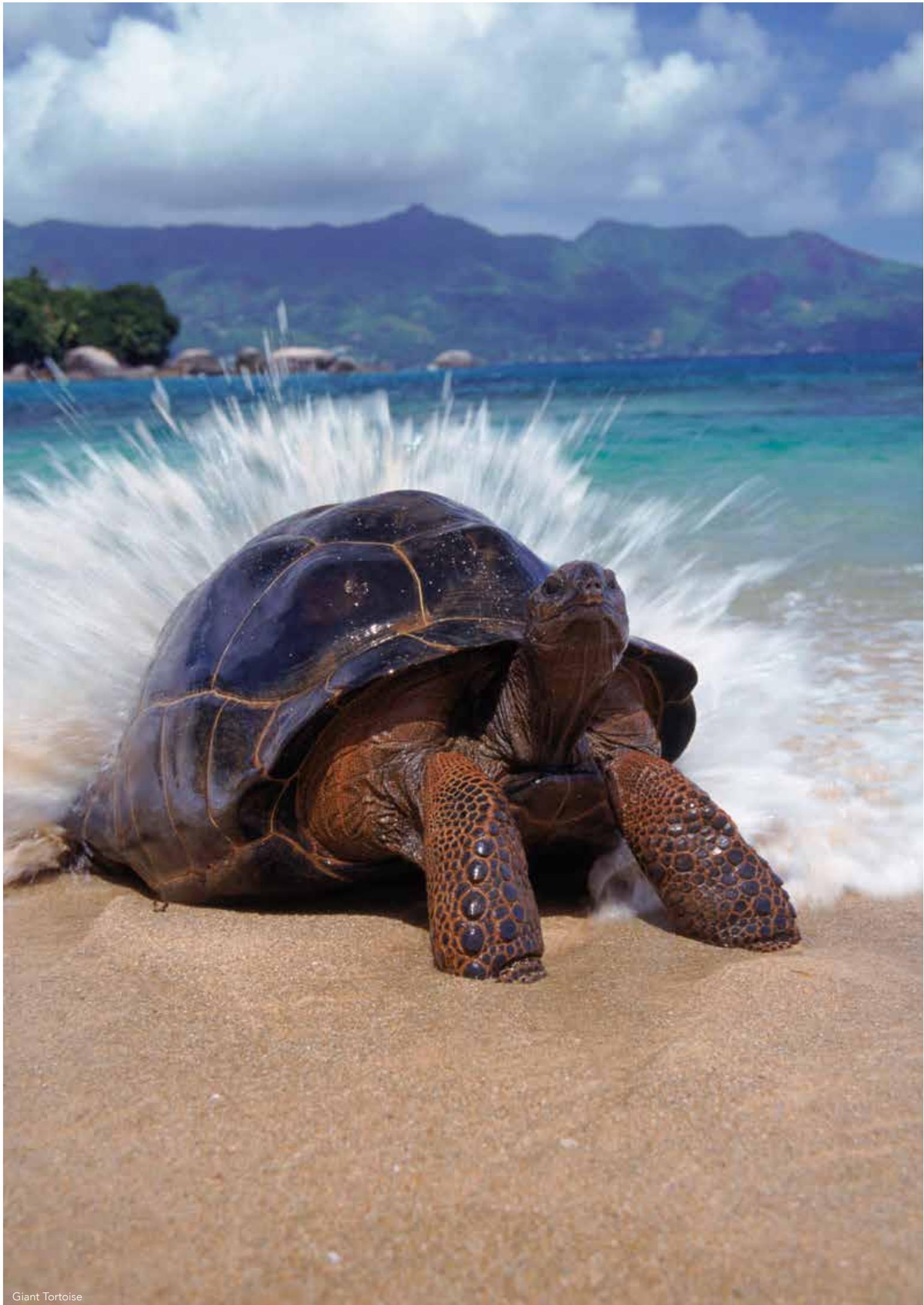
Based on double occupancy

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

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Shackleton	Hebridean	£13895	£13395
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Byrd	Superior for sole use	£14095	£13595

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 14 nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch & dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.

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



Giant Tortoise

# Passage through the Seychelles

Island hopping through the beautiful Seychelles aboard the MS Hebridean Sky  
4<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup> February 2024



The Seychelles offers the visitor a tropical beauty that is difficult, if not impossible to match anywhere else in the world. Spread out over a vast area of the Indian Ocean, they offer everything from quiet sophistication and enchanting scenery to wild and uninhabited nature reserves, where the very remoteness of the islands has protected them from the worst excesses of mankind. We know the region well having operated vessels there for almost thirty years and if ever there was an area perfect for expedition cruising it is here, a timeless world of wonders both below and above the water. With our fleet of Zodiacs we can reach the unreachable, landing on remote beaches, walking through verdant rainforest and national parks and getting close to some unique flora and fauna.

Obviously, such beauty and serenity is best enjoyed with a small number of travelling companions and the MS Hebridean Sky is an ideal vessel, with a maximum of just over 100 passengers she offers all the comforts of a larger vessel, but with the added luxury of a small number of passengers and an expert expedition team who will add much to your enjoyment.

Setting sail from Tanzania, we have a full day to explore atmospheric Zanzibar before we spend time discovering Kilwa Kisiwani, a site of exceptional historical interest. Continuing to the Seychelles, our journey will include all aspects of this extraordinary island nation from the lesser known and rarely visited Outer Seychelles where we visit the Aldabra Islands, the world's largest coral atoll and a World Heritage Site to the developed Inner Seychelles with staggeringly beautiful islands such as Aride and Praslin. For many the highlight of the voyage will be our time spent exploring the Aldabra Island Group, the breeding ground of the giant tortoise and in addition to seeing some of these endearing creatures we should also encounter dolphins and turtles as well as countless birds including the flightless rail, the last flightless bird in the Indian Ocean. To explore the abundant crystal clear waters of the vast lagoon and to set foot on atolls which have never been exploited by the hand of man is a rare experience.

## What to Expect

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from last season which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

**Cosmoledo:** Today we had another day in the Aldabra group this time on the island of Cosmoledo. Like the other islands of the Aldabra group this is an uplifted coral island. It was an early start due to the tide times and at 0730 the flotilla of Zodiacs made the journey into the mouth of the atoll, across the lagoon to the eastern shore. Once we arrived, the site was wondrous. Thousands of nesting birds sitting on the coral rock. They were mostly boobies, both red footed and masked, but there were also species of herons, terns, noddies, frigate birds and tropic birds. The sea was also full of turtles. There seemed to be hundreds darting about in the shallow water. The Zodiacs took their time passing up the shore, allowing plenty of bird photos to be taken. We then found little patches of beach to land on and to have a small walk about or a little swim or paddle. All the while the tide was quickly dropping and the beaches were becoming larger and larger. Soon it was time to head back to the ship and set sail for the Farquhar Group of islands. Once back on board we enjoyed lunch, followed by a great talk all about the biology of coral reefs.

**Aride:** Aride is a nature reserve famed for its birdlife. The keen birders set off at 0630, hoping to get the best of the birdlife. The intrepid birders set out and were rewarded with the sight of birds that were totally unafraid of man, many of them at very close range. The birds were certainly friendly as were the two species of skink. White-tailed tropicbirds swooped through the woodland and crash landed in the shrubbery on their way to

their nests, their landing technique a stark contrast to their grace in flight. The fairy terns sat on their branches and met us eye to eye. Most people got to see the fluffy little chicks, hatched on a bare branch and now moving around, waiting for their feathers to grow so that they could fly. Seychelles fodies were everywhere while common moorhens ran around in the undergrowth, far away from water.

## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Dar es Salaam, Tanzania.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Dar es Salaam.** Arrive today and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

**Day 3 Zanzibar.** Our arrival into Zanzibar's colourful harbour which will be crowded with dhows, very much sets the scene for our visit to this Arab-style city with its long narrow streets, bazaars, houses with overhanging balconies and intricately carved doorways. On a morning walking tour, soak up the

timeless atmosphere of Stone Town including Livingstone House, Sultan's Palace, the slave market and the Old Fort. The afternoon is free to relax and explore independently or join a tour to a spice farm to experience the various fruits and spices cultivated on the island. Alternatively, travel to Jozani Forest which sustains a variety of wildlife and birds, including the rare red colobus monkey, indigenous to the island.

**Day 4 Kilwa Kisiwani.** Over lunch we anchor off Kilwa Kisiwani, a site of exceptional historical interest where the atmospheric ruins represent a wide sweep of East African coastal history, from the

heights of the Swahili and Shirazi trading civilisation to the darker days of slavery and the uprisings against German rule. Once one of Africa's wealthiest towns, Kilwa Kisiwani is now a UNESCO World Heritage Site and contains the world's most extensive and best-preserved Swahili ruins. We will spend the afternoon on a walking tour and see the prominent fort and the Great Mosque which stood at the heart of this ancient city which was once the largest in East Africa.

**Day 5 At Sea.** Our lecture programme continues as we spend a relaxing day at sea sailing to the Seychelles.

**Days 6 to 8 Aldabra Islands, Seychelles.** We have three days to enjoy the Aldabra group of islands and our itinerary will be in the hands of our Expedition Leader and Captain who will monitor the local conditions to ensure we maximise our time here. Whilst our itinerary is flexible, we hope to call at the island of Assumption which was ruthlessly plundered for its vast deposits of guano in the early 20th century. Happily, peace has returned, and the wildlife of rare birds and green turtles are once again in abundance. Our time here will be spent beachcombing, on nature walks or snorkelling. We also hope to reach Cosmoledo where a huge ring of twelve islands circles a lagoon. Many of the atolls are still to be surveyed and we will explore some of them by Zodiac. This is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area with all three species of booby found in the Seychelles including the last breeding site for the brown booby. Also spot sooty terns and great frigate birds. We will also spend time on Aldabra, the island referred to by Sir Julian Huxley as "One of nature's treasures and should belong to the whole world". Aldabra is unique and every time we call at what is believed to be the world's largest atoll we find something new of interest. Sightings have been made of the extremely rare white throated rail and the atoll is also home to the world's second largest colony of frigate birds and the largest crab, the coconut crab. Whilst exploring by Zodiac it is difficult to know in which direction to look. The clear blue seas abound with life, the skies are alive with varied birdlife and ashore giant land tortoises forage as they have done for millions of years. We hope to explore Picard Island

with a short walk to see some of the numerous tortoises and robber crabs or swim in the lagoon, a vast 17 mile stretch of shallow clear water. From our Zodiacs we can watch the ever-changing undersea world and snorkel in colourful coral waters.

**Day 9 Farquhar Group.** Spend the morning at sea before we anchor off Farquhar where we will use our Zodiacs to explore the sparkling lagoon of this remote, atoll ringed island of coconut and casuarina trees. Hawksbill and green sea turtles come to the atoll to nest and several of the Farquhar Group's islands are Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas. The island is a haven providing us with a delightful afternoon of bird watching or snorkelling.

**Day 10 Alphonse Islands.** There are three islands in the Alphonse group and as we approach the islands over lunch you will understand why they are regarded by many to be the most beautiful of the 115 islands in the Seychelles archipelago. On the main island the circular lagoon offers good snorkelling and there are a number of tracks across the island to enjoy island walks.

**Day 11 Amirante Islands.** This morning we arrive at the 28 islands in the Amirante Group of islands which were discovered by Vasco de Gama in 1501 and are considered to be some of the most pristine and untouched islands in the world. If conditions permit we will spend the day on Desroches, the largest of the islands, although still only measuring six kilometres by 1.5 kilometres. Enjoy nature walks with our naturalists and members of the island's conservation team observing the flora and fauna and in particular the giant tortoises and nesting turtles. Meanwhile keen snorkellers will have the opportunity to swim over the outlying coral.

**Day 12 Aride & Curieuse.** Early this morning we will anchor off Aride, one of the finest and most important seabird islands in the Indian Ocean. Over one million seabirds breed on the island including tropical shearwater, lesser noddy, frigatebirds and roseate tern and also five species unique to the Seychelles such as the Seychelles warbler and Seychelles magpie robin. The island is largely covered in native woodland including the endemic wright's gardenia, a shrub with beautifully



Hawksbill Sea Turtle



Seychelles



Frigate Bird

scented flowers found nowhere else in the world. Sail over lunch to Curieuse, a rugged island which was once home to a leper colony and now houses an eco-museum and visitor centre. The island is an important nesting site for hawksbill turtles and boasts endemic vine and mangroves which we explore on an island walk.

**Day 13 Praslin & Grande Soeur.** From our overnight anchorage we will land on Praslin to explore the 'Vallee de Mai', the last remnant of the original high canopied Seychelles palm forest and home to the coco de mer. We will walk its paths looking out for the rare black parrot and enjoying its

natural beauty. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail the short distance to Grande Soeur, an idyllic uninhabited island. Spend the afternoon walking the island trails which link the island's white sand beaches and maybe catch sight of some of the giant Aldabra tortoises or enjoy a final snorkelling opportunity in the turquoise waters.

**Day 14 Mahe to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

**Day 15 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
Amundsen	Standard	£9795	£9295
Byrd	Superior	£10095	£9595
Mawson	Premium	£10595	£10095
Mawson	Corner	£11095	£10595
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£11595	£11095
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£11895	£11395
Shackleton	Hebridean	£13295	£12795
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£11795	£11295
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£12095	£11595

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 12 nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch & dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance, Tanzania visa.



# Splendours of the Seychelles

Discover the beauty of the Seychelles from aboard the MS Hebridean Sky  
16<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> February 2024



Sailing in the tropics, when back at home the UK is in the depths of mid-winter, is a pleasurable enough thought; when the destination is the Seychelles such thoughts are irresistible. The islands and atolls of the Seychelles are quite simply some of the most beautiful on earth and remain a natural paradise of deserted beaches of white sand washed by warm, clear turquoise seas and shaded by abundant palms and kindly towering takamakas. The Seychelles epitomises all that is faraway and exotic. Indeed as you stand back to admire the vista there is sometimes an almost surreal quality where the light and nature conspire to produce

an impossibly romantic scene. Such beauty also comes with its cast of characters, giant tortoises roam, colonies of birds congregate overhead and in the seas a kaleidoscope of tropical fish swim amongst the coral.

Those who have sailed with us through these extraordinary waters have experienced the magic of dropping anchor off a remote atoll at first light and watched the dawn illuminate the watery horizon. Then as the sun rises, have ventured ashore by Zodiac, landing on a deserted beach to discover the rich bird and marine life, the exotic flora, nature reserves and working estates of cinnamon and coconuts, breadfruit and bananas and all wonder of strange tropical fruits.

If ever there was a region perfect for expedition cruising it is here and the MS Hebridean Sky is the perfect size and equipped vessel for our voyage. Our journey will include all aspects of this extraordinary island nation from the developed Inner Seychelles with staggeringly beautiful islands such as Praslin and Grande Soeur to the less known and rarely visited Outer Seychelles. Here we will sail all the way to Aldabra, the world's largest coral atoll and a World Heritage Site. Being one of the most difficult places in the world to access and having a lack of freshwater has saved Aldabra from any tourism development and only small vessels like the MS Hebridean Sky are allowed to visit. It is therefore a great privilege to be able to land on the untouched beaches of Aldabra, the breeding ground for thousands of giant tortoises and home to some of the rarest birds in the Indian Ocean. To explore the abundant crystal clear waters of the vast lagoon and to set foot on atolls which have never been exploited by the hand of man is a rare experience.





Fairy Tern



Exploring by Zodiac



Giant Tortoise, Aldabra



Curieuse

## What to Expect

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below are some extracts from the ship's log from last season which will provide you with an idea of what to expect.

**Aldabra, Seychelles:** We set off soon after breakfast, entering through the west channels, dropping some of our party at the research base for guided walks, while the rest of us continued into the lagoon to explore. At this time the lagoon was full of water, so we circled round some of the limestone islets. One had a small flock of the beautiful black-naped terns on it. Beneath our boats eagle rays sped away and small schools of coloured fish seemed to be everywhere. At one point we entered a narrow channel deep into the red mangroves, with sunbirds twittering around us and, at a sunny bend a huge green turtle swam around. Then along the mangrove edge we came to the best patch of all: a mixed nesting colony of red-footed boobies and both lesser and greater frigate birds. Some nests had chicks almost 12 months old which will soon fledge. Others were sat tight on tiny white fluffy chicks. The strangest thing was to see boobies fast asleep in the branches, their bright red feet clutching hard, their head and beak hanging down below their feet, and their eyes closed tight. That afternoon we saw why they get so tired. Watching from the decks, we passed through some large flocks of birds scanning for fish at the surface, while the most agile individuals queued up alongside our ship to plunge down in split second dives to try and catch flying fish bursting out of the water. Those successful birds that get back to the lagoon may then be chased and harried by frigates until they disgorge their catch.

**Cosmoledo, Seychelles:** At first light the scout boat set out to the west to search for potential snorkel sites. Within minutes we had spinner dolphins bow riding. The 'Special Booby Squad' set off first with Guy to the far western end of Ile du Sud. Here, in a sheltered bay they could step ashore at the best masked booby colony in the Seychelles with birds everywhere and immaculate black and white birds swooping low overhead, or sitting tight on the ground on two pure white eggs. Brown boobies were also present, which means we have seen all three species of the Indian Ocean boobies, and, even more remarkably, at their breeding colonies. The rest of us set off into the main passage, landing on a mile-long coral sand beach on the inner shore of Wizard Island. Perfect turquoise waters in which to swim, the sun rising in a perfectly clear sky, and to add that little touch of genius, a Zodiac came ashore with kitchen crew, their striped parasol and a cold box containing three different flavours of ice cream! Would Darwin have ever gone home if the Beagle had been as perfectly equipped as our maritime palace? Some walked the length of the beach for exercise, others fell asleep in the shade of beach crest bushes, the energetic castaways explored inland and found two new birds: the Madagascar cisticola and Abbott's sunbird, the latter gorging on nectar in the high heads of flowering sisal bushes. A view from the high dunes showed turtles mating at sea and numerous turtle nest mounds on the outer shore. The colours of the lagoon, as seen from the beach were an unforgettable series of intense pastel hues: bright chalky blue high with swirls of cirrus, a milky blue below that, coming down through vivid pale indigo at the horizon. Then a clean horizontal band of the creamy coral strand, and below this, pure turquoise water over the sand bar before us.



## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Mahe, Seychelles.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Mahe.** Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky moored in Port Victoria. Enjoy welcome dinner and drinks as we sail the short distance to Praslin and our overnight anchorage.

**Day 3 Praslin & Grande Soeur.** Today we will land on Praslin to explore the 'Vallee de Mai', the last remnant of the original high canopied Seychelles palm forest and home to the coco de mer. We will walk its paths looking out for the rare black parrot and enjoying its natural beauty. Return to the ship for lunch as we sail the short distance to Grande Soeur, an idyllic uninhabited island. We will spend the afternoon walking the island trails which link the island's white sand beaches and maybe catch sight of some of the giant Aldabra tortoises or enjoy the opportunity to snorkel in the turquoise waters.

**Day 4 Amirante Islands.** This morning we arrive at the 28 islands in the Amirante Group of islands which were discovered by Vasco de Gama in 1501 and are considered to be some of the most pristine and untouched islands in the world. If conditions permit we will spend the day on Desroches, the largest of the islands, although still only measuring six kilometres by 1.5 kilometres. Enjoy nature walks with our naturalists and members of the island's conservation team observing the flora and fauna and in particular the giant tortoises and nesting turtles. Meanwhile keen snorkellers will have the chance to swim over the outlying coral.

### Days 5 & 6 Farquhar Group.

Spend the morning at sea as we cruise to the Farquhar Group which consists of ten islands and atolls which cover an area of 370 square kilometres. We will spend two days here and will discover the Providence Atoll before we anchor off Farquhar where we will use our Zodiacs to explore the sparkling lagoon of this remote, atoll ringed island of coconut and casuarina trees. Hawksbill and green sea turtles come to the atoll to nest and several of the Farquhar Group's islands are Important Bird and Biodiversity Areas. We will visit the island's settlement, take walks looking for the birdlife or snorkel in the clear waters.

**Day 7 Cosmoledo.** Today we explore Cosmoledo where a huge ring of twelve islands circles a lagoon. Many of the atolls are still to be surveyed and we will explore some of them by Zodiac. This is an Important Bird and Biodiversity Area with all three species of booby found in the Seychelles including the last breeding site for the brown booby. We also hope to spot sooty terns and great frigate birds on land and have the opportunity to see turtles as we swim and snorkel in the lagoon.

**Day 8 Aldabra.** Aldabra, the island referred to by Sir Julian Huxley as "One of nature's treasures and should belong to the whole world" is unique and every time we call at what is believed to be the world's largest atoll we find something new of interest. Sightings have been made of the extremely rare white throated rail and the atoll is also home to the world's second largest colony of frigate birds and to the largest crab, the coconut crab. Whilst exploring by Zodiac it is difficult to know in which direction to look. The clear blue seas abound with life, the skies are alive with varied birdlife and

ashore giant land tortoises forage as they have done for millions of years. We hope to explore Picard Island with a short walk to see some of the thousands of tortoises and numerous robber crabs or swim in the lagoon, a vast 17 mile stretch of shallow clear water. From our Zodiacs we can watch the ever-changing undersea world and snorkel in colourful coral waters.

**Day 9 At Sea.** Spend a relaxing day at sea as we return to the islands of the Inner Seychelles.

**Day 10 Alphonse Islands.** There are three islands in the Alphonse group and as we approach the islands you will understand why they are regarded by many to be the most beautiful of the 115 islands in the Seychelles archipelago. On the main island the circular lagoon offers good snorkelling and there are a number of tracks across the island to enjoy island walks.

**Day 11 Aride & Curieuse.** Early this morning we will anchor off

Aride, one of the finest and most important seabird islands in the Indian Ocean. Over one million seabirds breed on the island including tropical shearwater, lesser noddy, frigatebirds and roseate tern and also five species unique to the Seychelles such as the Seychelles warbler and Seychelles magpie robin. The island is largely covered in native woodland including the endemic wright's gardenia, a shrub with beautifully scented flowers found nowhere else in the world. Sail over lunch to Curieuse, a rugged island which was once home to a leper colony and now houses an eco-museum and visitor centre. The island is an important nesting site for hawksbill turtles and boasts endemic vine and mangroves which we explore on an island walk.

**Day 12 Mahe to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

**Day 13 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
Amundsen	Standard	£7995	£7495
Byrd	Superior	£8295	£7795
Mawson	Premium	£8495	£7995
Mawson	Corner	£8695	£8195
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£9495	£8995
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£9995	£9495
Shackleton	Hebridean	£10895	£10395
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£9995	£9495
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£10295	£9795

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 10 nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch & dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.





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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: Praslin.