

SPECIAL  
OFFER – SAVE  
**£500**  
PER PERSON

VOYAGES IN THE  
**INDIAN  
OCEAN**

ABOARD THE MS HEBRIDEAN SKY  
NOVEMBER 2024 TO FEBRUARY 2025

NOBLE CALEDONIA

# 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.

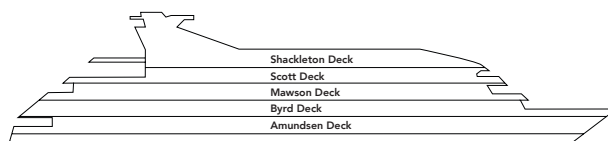


Please note that cruises with this logo visit out of the way destinations and will be accompanied by an expedition team. Landings and excursions will be made by Zodiac landing craft. These cruises will appeal to the more adventurous and those who enjoy the natural world.

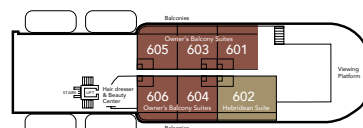


Alfresco Dining

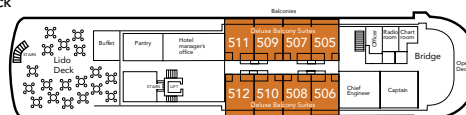
## MS HEBRIDEAN SKY DECK PLAN



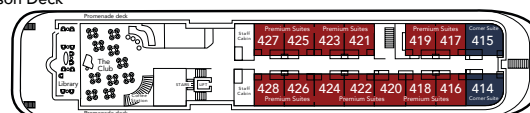
### Shackleton Deck



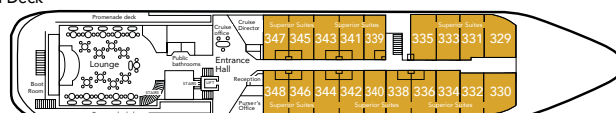
### Scott Deck



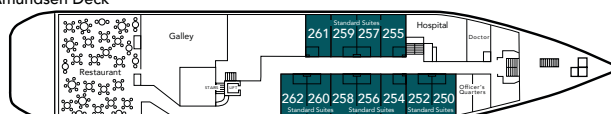
### Mawson Deck



### Byrd Deck



### Amundsen Deck



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

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 with Guest Speakers Daniel Austin & Hilary Bradt

8<sup>th</sup> to 24<sup>th</sup> November 2024



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 incorporates 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.



## Guest Speaker – Daniel Austin



Daniel is a travel writer, naturalist, photographer and tour lecturer who specialises in the exotic Indian Ocean island of Madagascar. He visits Madagascar every year to explore and photograph its diverse wonders. His fascination with this enigmatic country extends not only to its unique flora and fauna, but also to its people, culture, history, geology and beyond. Daniel has written three books about Madagascar and contributed

words and images to countless others. He also presents occasional lectures on the country, including at the prestigious Royal Geographical Society, as well as on specialist tours of the island. His expertise is frequently consulted by filmmakers making documentaries about Madagascar. In addition, Daniel is Secretary of the Anglo-Malagasy Society, a UK-based organisation founded in 1961 to promote knowledge of Madagascar amongst British people and to foster relations between the two countries. Daniel is the founder of the Madagascar Library, a private collection of some 3,000 books, maps and other documents about the country, available for use by academics, journalists, historians and other researchers.

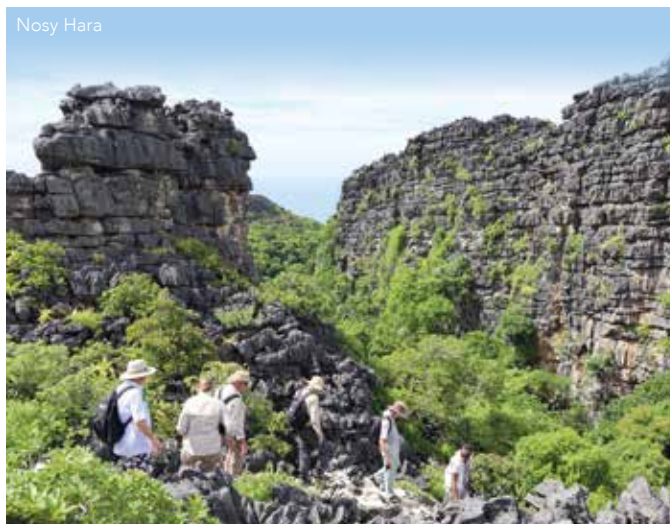
## Guest Speaker – Hilary Bradt



We are delighted that Hilary Bradt will be joining us on board the MS Hebridean Sky for our November 2024 departure. Hilary Bradt co-founded Bradt Travel Guides in 1974, with a slim volume on backpacking in Peru & Bolivia. Two years later she travelled the length of Africa, from Cape Town to Cairo, and made her first visit to Madagascar. She returned to East Africa and Madagascar as a tour leader in the 1980s

and continued to visit Madagascar regularly both as a tour leader and lecturer for Noble Caledonia for many years. She wrote the first English-language to Madagascar guide in 1986; now in its 13th edition, updated by Daniel Austin. Through the decades she has written countless articles on Madagascar, its people and wildlife. In 2008 she was awarded an MBE for services to the travel industry and to charity and has received four Lifetime Achievement awards from travel organisations. Her proudest moment was in 2018 when she was invited to the Presidential Palace in Antananarivo to be made an Officer of the Order of Madagascar (the Madagascan equivalent to an OBE) for services to tourism in Madagascar.





Nosy Hara



Ankarantsika National Park



Praslin



Fairy tern



Giant tortoise, Aldabra

## 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 noddie, 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



Exploring by Zodiac



Avenue des Baobabs

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.

**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 Antsokey 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	£10795	£10295
Byrd	Superior	£11095	£10595
Mawson	Premium	£11395	£10895
Mawson	Corner	£11695	£11195
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£12695	£12195
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£13195	£12695
Shackleton	Hebridean	£14295	£13795
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£13795	£13295
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£14495	£13995

**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 • Shore excursions • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.







# MARVELS OF MADAGASCAR

Discover the wildlife & wonders of Madagascar aboard the MS Hebridean Sky

21<sup>st</sup> November to 4<sup>th</sup> December 2024



The term ‘unique’ is an often overused description in the travel world but certainly applies to the island of Madagascar. The animals, plants, landscapes and people that make up this thousand mile long island are unlike anywhere else in the world. This extraordinary country long remained obscure as a destination and is still relatively unknown amongst even the most serious of travellers. 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.

Our ten night voyage focuses on the wonders of the island of Madagascar with opportunities to explore rainforests full of wildlife including lemurs, chameleons and indigenous birdlife as well as witnessing the underwater world and village life. 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 some wonderful places denied to larger ships, you can enjoy encounters with fabulous endemic wildlife in this immensely rich and timeless corner of the Indian Ocean. Our onboard experts will greatly enrich your experience and ensure that we make the most of our time on the world’s “eighth continent”.



## The Itinerary

**Day 1 London to Johannesburg, South Africa.** Fly by scheduled indirect flight.

**Day 2 Johannesburg.** Arrive today and transfer to our hotel for an overnight stay. The remainder of the day is at leisure before we meet for drinks and dinner.

**Day 3 Johannesburg to Tulear, Madagascar.** Return to the airport this morning to join our specially chartered flight to Tulear. Arrive this afternoon and transfer to the MS Hebridean Sky for embarkation. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail this evening.

**Day 4 Morondava.** After a morning cruising we arrive during lunch at our anchorage off the town of Morondava. We will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach from where 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.

**Day 5 At Sea.** Spend a leisurely day on board as we continue our journey around the Madagascan Coast.

**Day 6 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 7 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 opportunity 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 8 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 9 & 10 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 11 At Sea.** Enjoy the day at sea to relax and reflect on our Madagascan adventure as we sail to Reunion.

**Day 12 Reunion.** We arrive at breakfast in Reunion where we have a choice of excursions. On a full day tour we will visit the central highlands where spectacularly rugged peaks of dormant or extinct volcanoes cradle huge amphitheatres known as cirques, where mountains tower to over 10,000 feet and beautiful waterfalls plummet hundreds of feet. The rich

soil and mellow climate produce a lush and verdant landscape which is dotted with villages and towns with a uniquely French atmosphere. Fields of sugar cane and plantations of tropical fruits, vanilla and all manner of spices perfume the air. We will enjoy views from the Nez de Boeuf and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant we will visit the 'Cite du Volcan' museum. Alternatively enjoy a morning tour to a vanilla plantation in St Andre where we learn about the history and culture of this integral part of Reunion's heritage. Continue to Salazie, a verdant landscape and home to many waterfalls including the 'Voile de la Mariee' before spending some free time in St Denis on the way back to the ship. This afternoon is at leisure before we set sail this evening.

**Day 13 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 indirect flight to London.

**Day 14 London.** Arrive this morning.

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

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Byrd	Superior	£9295	£8795
Mawson	Premium	£9495	£8995
Mawson	Corner	£9895	£9395
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£10495	£9995
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£10795	£10295
Shackleton	Hebridean	£11495	£10995
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£9095	£8595
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£9295	£8795

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel from London to Johannesburg & from Mauritius to London • Specially chartered flight from Johannesburg to Tulear • Overnight accommodation in Johannesburg with breakfast and dinner • 10 nights aboard the MS Hebridean Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.

# MADAGASCAR – THE EIGHTH CONTINENT

A circumnavigation of Madagascar aboard the MS Hebridean Sky  
with Guest Speaker Daniel Austin

2<sup>nd</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> December 2024 & 19<sup>th</sup> December 2024 to 7<sup>th</sup> January 2025



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

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

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



## What to Expect...

Flexibility is the key to an expedition cruise; sometimes the whole day's schedule will be changed to maximise your experience, something that would not be possible on a large cruise ship. Each day holds something new and below 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 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. 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.







## The Itinerary

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

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

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

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

**Days 5 & 6 Taolagnaro, Madagascar.** Our first call in Madagascar is the southeastern port of Taolagnaro, also known as Fort Dauphin. This was the first French settlement in Madagascar, situated on a peninsula overlooked by the Anosy mountains. We will moor overnight and our time here will include an excursion to Nahampoana Private Park. The reserve is only 67 hectares but home to four species of lemur including ring-tailed and sifakas whilst the gardens showcase Madagascan plants with three-cornered palms and spiny Desiderata trees. A tour of Taolagnaro

will include the market and historical buildings where we will learn about the arrival of the Magalasy people to Madagascar and the links with Reunion. Also enjoy walks in the Domaine de la Cascade, a 136 hectare park consisting of a nursery set in a paradisiacal valley with several walking trails and a beautiful waterfall.

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

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

**Day 9 Morondava.** From our anchorage off the town of Morondava, we will use the Zodiacs to land on the local beach. From here there will be a choice of excursions to explore the local region. A half day morning tour will visit the Avenue des Baobabs. Of the eight baobab species in the



world, six are endemic to Madagascar and here we will see the *Adansonia grandidieri* species with a row of 20 to 25 trees which border the gravel road. We will learn about the trees and their spiritual significance before 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 Taomasina.** Our final call in Madagascar is Taomasina, 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 Taomasina this afternoon. Alternatively visit the Ivoloana 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

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

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Amundsen	Standard	£11895	£11395
Byrd	Superior	£12095	£11595
Mawson	Premium	£12395	£11895
Mawson	Corner	£12895	£12395
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£13895	£13395
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£14295	£13795
Shackleton	Hebridean	£15295	£14795
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£14895	£14395
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£15595	£15095

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

**Not Included:** Travel insurance.







# ISLANDS OF THE INDIAN OCEAN

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

5<sup>th</sup> to 21<sup>st</sup> January 2025



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.

Boobie, Aldabra



## What to Expect...

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

### **Masoala National Park & Nosy Mangabe**

**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 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 here again for an afternoon exploratory walk or to enjoy a long Zodiac cruise along the peninsula.







Giant tortoise, Aldabra



Waterfalls, Reunion



Panther chameleon



Nosy Mangabe

## The Itinerary

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

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

**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 Ivoloia 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 walking 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 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 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

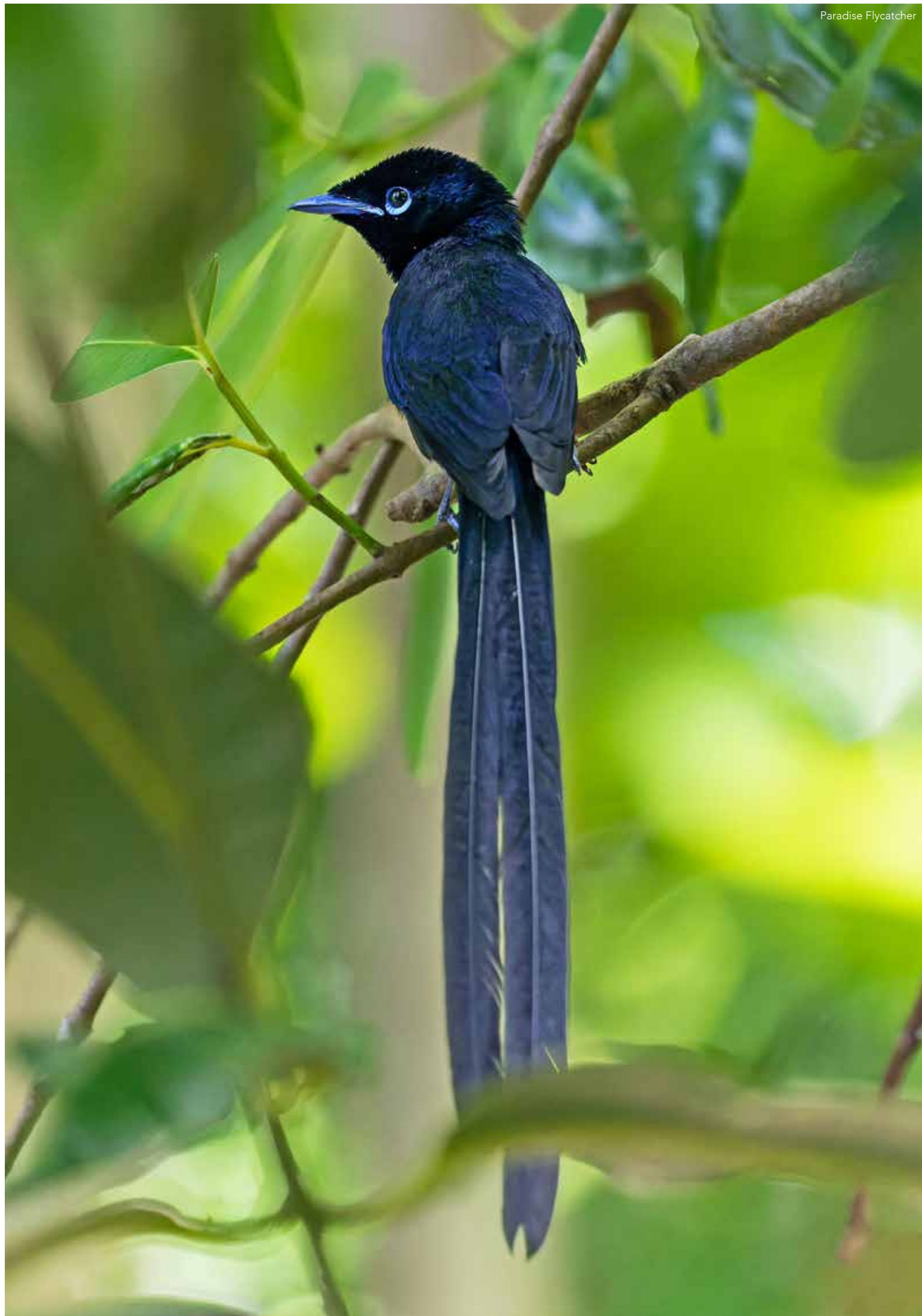
### SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £500 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Amundsen	Standard	£10795	£10295
Byrd	Superior	£11095	£10595
Mawson	Premium	£11395	£10895
Mawson	Corner	£11695	£11195
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£12695	£12195
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£13195	£12695
Shackleton	Hebridean	£14295	£13795
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£13795	£13295
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£14495	£13995

**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, Tanzania visa.





# PASSAGE THROUGH THE SEYCHELLES



Island hopping through the beautiful Seychelles aboard the MS Hebridean Sky

19<sup>th</sup> January to 2<sup>nd</sup> February 2025



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.



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

## 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





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 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	£10295	£9795
Byrd	Superior	£10595	£10095
Mawson	Premium	£10995	£10495
Mawson	Corner	£11495	£10995
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£11995	£11495
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£12395	£11895
Shackleton	Hebridean	£13795	£13295
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£12295	£11795
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£12595	£12095

**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 • Shore excursions • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance, Tanzania visa.

# PASSAGE TO INDIA

A voyage from the Seychelles to Chennai including the Maldives & Sri Lanka aboard the MS Hebridean Sky with Guest Speaker Rear Admiral John Lippiett

31<sup>st</sup> January to 18<sup>th</sup> February 2025

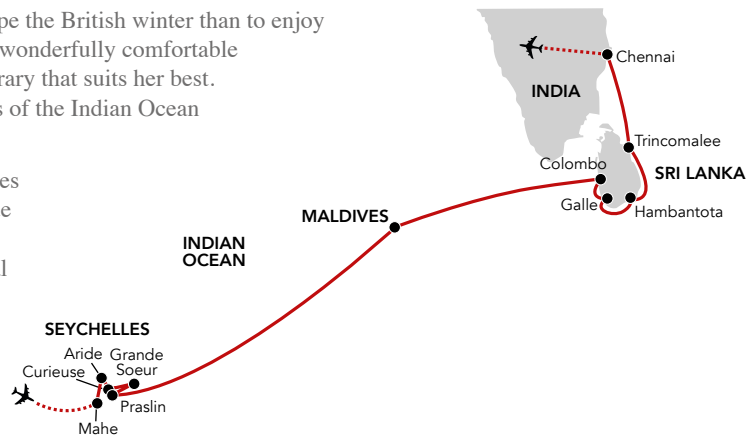


We find it difficult to imagine a more perfect way to escape the British winter than to enjoy the warmth and beauty of the Indian Ocean aboard the wonderfully comfortable MS Hebridean Sky as she undertakes exactly the type of itinerary that suits her best. Join us in the tropics as we journey from the islands and atolls of the Indian Ocean and around Sri Lanka to the Bay of Bengal.

Our journey to Chennai first allows us to explore the Seychelles and Maldives, two of the world's most pristine and picturesque archipelagos. With our purpose built Zodiacs we will land on otherwise inaccessible beaches, explore vast lagoons and coral reefs and encounter some extraordinarily beautiful tropical scenery. Our small ship is ideal for such a region, allowing us to enjoy the peace and tranquillity of this paradise. After all, it would be disappointing to find yourself in the company of hundreds on what was a deserted beach.

Contrasting well with this natural world exploration, our itinerary then takes a more cultural focus as we reach Sri Lanka. Here we spend time in Colombo with its Buddhist and Hindu temples and old colonial buildings before exploring Galle Fort, the fortified old city founded by the Portuguese colonists in the 16th century and now a UNESCO World Heritage Site. There is also the option to visit Polonnaruwa, the 5th century ancient city considered to be one of the best planned archaeological sites in the country. Whilst in Sri Lanka we also discover some natural world wonders with visits to Yala National Park, renowned for its rich wildlife, most notably its many elephants, and Bundala National Park, a haven for birdwatchers and Sri Lanka's first designated wetland site of international importance.

After much adventure, our voyage will end with a leisurely day at sea as we sail across to Chennai allowing for time to catch up with fellow travellers and the onboard team regarding all you have seen and experienced on our passage to India. This unusual itinerary will appeal to those looking for something different, incorporating explorations of the natural world with a more expedition focus, followed by a fascinating look at Sri Lanka. With the MS Hebridean Sky as our base and travelling with just over 100 fellow passengers, we can enjoy great food, good company, a convivial atmosphere and an expert team which entices travellers to cruise on her time and time again.



Frigate bird



Maldives

## Guest Speaker – Rear Admiral John Lippiett



John Lippiett had a 36 year career in the Royal Navy, serving in a large number of ships from aircraft carriers to minesweepers and deployed to all of the world's operational theatres. He was second-in-command of the frigate HMS Ambuscade throughout the Falklands War. John commanded three ships, a Frigate Squadron, and then the School of Maritime Warfare. On promotion to Rear Admiral, he flew his Flag at sea as Flag Officer Sea Training before serving in Naples as Chief of Staff of the NATO maritime forces in the Mediterranean. His final posting was as the Commandant of the Joint Services Command and Staff College. John retired and for nearly 13 years was the Chief Executive of the Mary Rose Trust, during which time he led the project to build the award-winning new museum and ensure Henry VIII's flagship is conserved and displayed for future generations. John now spends much time back at sea as a speaker on maritime history. He much enjoys telling the stories both of exploration, often using old maps, and of naval ventures that have taken place on the world's oceans over the last two thousand years.





Curieuse



Hawksbill Turtle



Exploring by Zodiac



Seema Malaka Temple, Colombo



The Lighthouse, Galle Fort

## 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 for embarkation. Enjoy welcome drinks and dinner as we sail the short distance to our overnight anchorage at Aride.

**Day 3 Aride & Curieuse.** Aride is 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 noddies, frigate birds and roseate tern in addition to 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. We will 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 will explore on an island walk.

**Day 4 Grande Soeur & Praslin.** Spend the morning on Grande Soeur, an idyllic uninhabited island. Walk the island trails which link the white sand beaches and maybe catch sight of some of the island's giant Aldabra tortoises, enjoy a swim or join a snorkelling opportunity in the turquoise waters. Our last call in the Seychelles will be at Praslin where we 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. This evening we will clear custom formalities as we start our journey to the Maldives.

**Days 5 to 7 At Sea.** Relax and enjoy our days at sea. Watch out for the bird and marine life and listen to the interesting talks by our onboard team. We are assured of warm weather so make the most of the fresh air, get lost in a novel from your deck chair and enjoy all the comforts of the MS Hebridean Sky.

**Days 8 to 11 Maldives.** We spend four days exploring the whole archipelago. This vast area of ocean is scattered with staggeringly beautiful dots of land surrounded by a cerulean sea. It offers some of the finest lagoons, beaches and coral reefs in the world. Our day to day schedule will be left in the capable hands of the Captain and Expedition Leader and we

hope to include visits to a number of atolls as we sail from the southern islands to the north. Our expedition team will be on hand to take guided walking tours to explore the birds and wildlife on land whilst our Snorkel Master will take us to some stunning reefs to view the wonderful coral and marine life.

**Day 12 At Sea.** Our lecture programme continues as we make our way across the Laccadive Sea to Sri Lanka.

**Day 13 Colombo, Sri Lanka.** Arrive today in Colombo, Sri Lanka's commercial capital and largest city which dates back over 600 years having been a trading hub for sea merchants and colonial rulers. Buddhist temples, Hindu temples, mosques and churches reflect the various beliefs practiced all over the island and the beautiful facades of the old, colonial buildings contrast with the modern but elegant shopping arcades that have been developed inside. There will be a choice of activities today including a cultural tour visiting the Gangaramaya Buddhist Temple, the National Museum and Independence Square. Alternatively visit the Kelaniya Buddhist Temple, located on the outskirts of the city, it is believed that Buddha visited and preached his doctrine here to a gathering of serpent-kings. Today worshippers come to lay sprigs of lotus flowers around the great white dagoba, light oil lamps, and sprinkle the base of the Tree of Enlightenment with purifying water. We can see the fine carvings and lovely frescoes, fascinating geometrically patterned ceiling paintings, and three important images of Buddha.

**Day 14 Galle.** Awake this morning in Galle where we take a walking tour of the impressive Galle Fortress. This UNESCO World Heritage Site is where the Portuguese first landed in Sri Lanka in the 16th century and it was then extensively fortified by the Dutch during the 17th century. Also see the maritime museum, which is housed in an old Dutch house, the lighthouse, mosque and church before taking a stroll through the narrow streets with their shuttered mansions and cloistered courtyards. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon is free to explore Galle further at your own pace. Alternatively join a tour to a nearby tea plantation where we will learn about the growing processes and enjoy a tasting.

**Days 15 & 16 Bundala National Park, Yala National Park & Kataragama.** We have one and a half days in Hambantota from where we will visit a





couple of the region's highlights. We will visit Yala National Park, known as Ruhunu it was designated as a wildlife sanctuary in 1900 and is now home to 44 varieties of mammal and 215 bird species. This vast region of arid scrub interspersed with pockets of dense forest and open patches of grassland hosts one of the highest densities of leopard in the world. On a Jeep safari we also hope to see sloth bears, jackals, wild boar and elephants. From Hambantota there will also be the opportunity to explore Bundala National Park, a haven for birdwatchers and Sri Lanka's first designated wetland site of international importance. Located in the deep south of the island, the diversity of the park lies in its landscape, from dry thorny scrubland to sand dunes and salt marshes, to mangroves and lagoons. Take a jeep through the park and discover close to 200 species of bird as well as many species of butterfly, crocodiles, elephants and deer. Alternatively you may wish to visit Kataragama, one of the three most important religious sites in Sri Lanka and a popular place of pilgrimage for the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and the indigenous Vedda communities of Sri Lanka and South India. According to the Buddhists this was one of the 16 places visited by Buddha during his stays in Sri Lanka. We will explore the religious complex built across the Menik Ganga which contains buildings from all three religions including the mosque, the temple, the small archaeological museum and the principal shrine of the god Kataragama. After our explorations we will spend a relaxing afternoon at sea as we sail to Trincomalee.

#### Day 17 Trincomalee, Pigeon Island National Park & Polonnaruwa.

Today we are in Trincomalee on the north east coast of Sri Lanka, one of the finest deep water harbours of the world. Choose to join a morning excursion of Trincomalee which includes Fort Frederick, built by the Portuguese in 1623, and walk to Swami Rock to see the Koneswaram Temple, one of the five most holy Shaivite temples in the country. Alternatively join a local boat to Pigeon Island National Park, an island off the Sri Lankan coast and one of two national marine parks in the country. Here it will be possible to snorkel over the coral reefs and maybe see some of the turtle species that reside here. A third option today will be a full day tour to Polonnaruwa. This 5th century ancient city was named a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 1982 and is considered to be one of the best planned archaeological sites in the country. The entire landscape of the region is punctuated by high man-made reservoirs, the most famous of which is Parakrama Samudra or the Sea of Parakrama, built during King Parakramabahu's reign in 1164-1196 AD. The monuments in the ancient city are relatively well preserved and highlights are the Royal Palace complex, including the King's Palace and Audience Hall and the spectacular Gal Vihare complex of four massive images of the Buddha cut from a single slab of granite.

**Day 18 Sailing to Chennai, India.** After a day at sea we arrive this evening in Chennai where we clear immigration formalities and moor overnight.

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



#### SHIP TO SHORE

Please note that this voyage is a combination of both expedition and destination style cruising. The first half of the itinerary will be expeditionary in nature with Zodiac landing craft used for every landing whilst in the Seychelles and Maldives and excursions focused around nature walks, swimming and snorkelling. For the second part of the itinerary, we will be alongside whilst in India and Sri Lanka with guided tours and safaris making use of local transport including jeeps and coaches.

#### PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

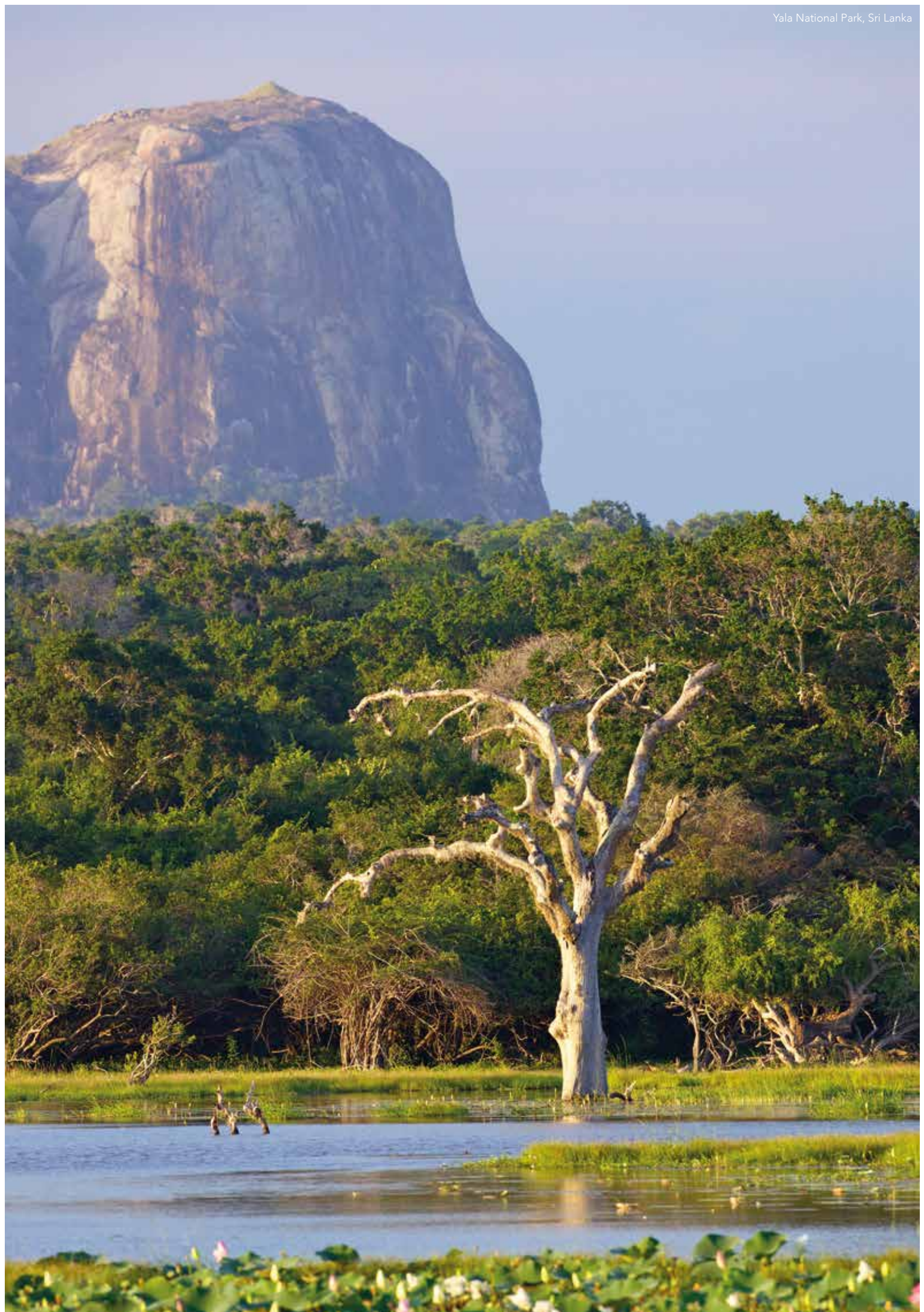
#### SPECIAL OFFER – SAVE £500 PER PERSON FOR A LIMITED TIME ONLY

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Mawson	Premium	£12295	£11795
Mawson	Corner	£12695	£12195
Scott	Deluxe Balcony	£14395	£13895
Shackleton	Owner's Balcony	£15295	£14795
Shackleton	Hebridean	£16295	£15795
Amundsen	Standard for sole use	£11495	£10995
Byrd	Superior for sole use	£11895	£11395

**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 onboard team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Airport taxes • Port taxes.

**Not Included:** Travel insurance, visas for India & Sri Lanka.









Giant tortoise



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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: Seychelles.