

NOBLE CALEDONIA

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



WONDERS OF  
**MADAGASCAR**  
& THE  
**SEYCHELLES**

An expedition from Mauritius to Mahe aboard the MS Island Sky

11<sup>th</sup> to 26<sup>th</sup> April 2023

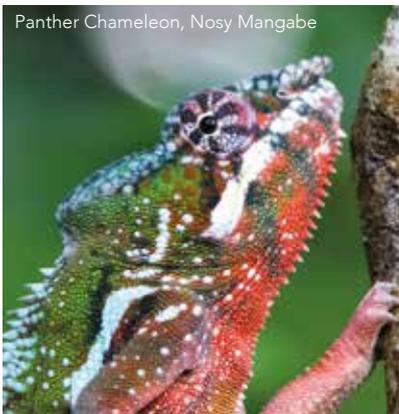


Giant Tortoise, Aldabra

Mantella frog



Join us aboard the MS Island Sky for this island hopping expedition through the Indian Ocean which will appeal to those who enjoy the natural world and all its wonders, travelling aboard a small ship and staying clear of the well-beaten tourist tracks. The all-suite MS Island Sky with her fleet of Zodiac landing craft is the perfect vessel for such an enterprise. Carrying just over 100 guests, she is a far cry from the latest breed of cruise ships and can visit small islands and backwaters that are denied to larger vessels. Your experience will be made all the more memorable by the 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 and will provide commentary on all we see.



Setting sail from Mauritius we will land on its nearest neighbour, Reunion, a little bit of France in the Indian Ocean and a truly stunning place. We will spend the day exploring its truly awesome and dramatic landscape before continuing to Madagascar where we will have four days to explore the incredible verdant and beautiful island and its unique flora and fauna. Continuing to the Seychelles, for many the highlight of the voyage will be our time spent exploring 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 that have never been exploited by the hand of man is a rare experience.

This itinerary is a veritable feast of beauty and the natural world. You will witness the bounty of the islands, the wildlife from the lemurs of Madagascar to the giant tortoises of Aldabra, an amazingly prolific birdlife and a mesmerising underwater life.



## 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.

**Nosy Mangabe:** *This morning we were anchored off the Masoala Peninsula and 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 were on the lookout for creatures big and small, and we found them. The lemurs appeared, racing through the treetops. The inquisitive white-fronted brown lemurs came and had a good look at us. Frogs were everywhere. There were the green-backed mantellas, quite brash in their black and green colours and tiny nondescript frogs laying their single egg in the stumps of bamboo. There were several leaf-tailed geckos that were so well camouflaged that they were almost impossible to see even at close range. We needn't have walked far from the landing stage at all. As we were starting to leave the lemurs came down to check us out and allowed for some great close up photographs. On walks inland, there were huge boulders of 3.2 billion year old granodiorite to be seen. The afternoon offered us an opportunity to land at the camp for a second time for an exploratory walk or a long Zodiac cruise down the peninsula. Both options were rewarded with excellent sightings of lemurs, chameleons and a variety of bird species. 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.*

**Aldabra:** *We were here at last – Aldabra! The sun appeared as a large orange ball and rapidly rose over the research station on Picard Island as the Zodiacs were readied for our landing. The timing of the tides necessitated a 7.30 am start. We were soon all ashore and split off into various groups for walks along the shore and into the undergrowth, a resident ranger accompanying each group. There was no need to search for the endemic, flightless land rails as they came to greet us emerging from beneath the ranger accommodation buildings or from the bushes, some of them shepherding chicks. Giant tortoises were obviously accustomed to people and wandered alongside us searching for any juicy leaf that may come within reach. The "raised coral" was much in evidence alongside the beach paths with very prominent pavement like protrusions clearly showing the constituent fan, plate and cushion forms of old reef growths. Out in the lagoon we could see the very characteristic mushroom, shaped champignon rocks. The dark shapes of rays could be seen swimming over the sand in the clear turquoise blue sea.*



## The Itinerary

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

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

**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. We will enjoy views from the Nez des Boeufs and see the Piton de la Fournaise crater. After enjoying a creole lunch in a local restaurant 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. We will also enjoy some free time in St Denis before returning to the MS Island Sky for lunch and an afternoon at leisure before we sail this evening.

**Day 4 At Sea.** Spend the day at sea as we sail to Madagascar.

**Day 5 Toamasina, Madagascar.** Our first call in Madagascar is at Toamasina, the country's main port and second largest city but also 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 use local boats to cruise along the canal and to enjoy the scenery followed by a nature walk in one of the private reserves. Take lunch in the reserve before returning to Toamasina



Black and white ruffed lemur

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 Nosy Mangabe & Masoala National Park.** Spend a day and a half in the Antongil Bay area. Here 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 will offer 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 and there will also be the option to swim off the beach or perhaps visit the local village.

**Day 8 Diego Suarez.** After a morning at sea we 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.

**Days 9 to 11 Aldabra Islands, Seychelles.** After a morning at sea we arrive at the Aldabra group of islands where we have two and a half days to explore. 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 a nature walk 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 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 12 At Sea.** Enjoy a relaxing day at sea as we head to the Inner Seychelles islands. Our lecture programme will continue or maybe find a spot on deck to watch for wildlife.

**Day 13 Alphonse.** There are three islands in the Alphonse group which is located directly south of

the Amirantes. As we approach the islands over breakfast 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 to enjoy island walks. Spend the morning exploring before returning to the ship for lunch and an afternoon cruising.

**Days 14 Aride & Praslin, Inner Seychelles.** Our final day will be spent exploring a couple of islands of the Inner Seychelles. 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. Spend the afternoon 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.

**Day 15 Mahe to London.** Disembark this morning and transfer to the airport for our scheduled indirect flight to London.

**Day 16 London.** Arrive this morning.

## PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

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

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Magellan	Standard	£9995	£9495
Columbus	Superior	£10295	£9795
Marco Polo	Premium	£10495	£9995
Marco Polo	Corner	£10895	£10395
Erikson	Deluxe Balcony	£11895	£11395
Explorer	Owner's Balcony Suites	£12395	£11895
Explorer	Island Suite	£13395	£12895
Magellan	Standard for sole use	£12995	£12495
Columbus	Superior for sole use	£13595	£13095

**PRICE INCLUDES:** Economy class scheduled air travel • 13 nights aboard the MS Island Sky on a full board basis • House wine, beer and soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Noble Caledonia expedition team • Shore excursions • Gratuities • Transfers • Port taxes.  
**Not Included:** Travel insurance, Madagascan visa.

# MS ISLAND SKY



Friendly Service



Deluxe Balcony Suite



The Restaurant

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

## Your Suite

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

## Your Dining

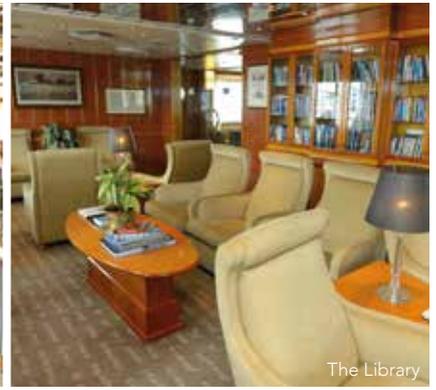
With only one sitting and a maximum of just over 100 passengers, the cuisine on board the MS Island Sky is of a consistent superior quality that befits such a vessel. In keeping with the informal atmosphere on board, when dining you are able to choose your seating arrangements and choice of restaurants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



Superior Suite



The Club



The Library

## Your Space

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

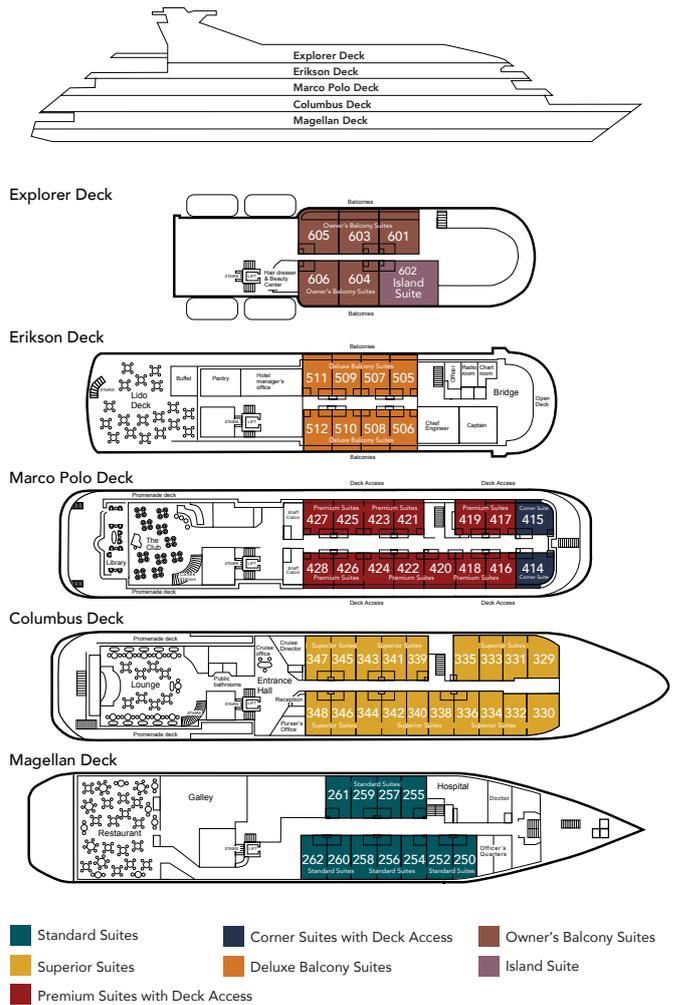
## Your Comfort

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

## Your Life On Board

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

## MS ISLAND SKY DECK PLAN



During this voyage 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.



# NOBLE CALEDONIA

2 Chester Close, Belgravia, London, SW1X 7BE  
 +44 (0)20 7752 0000 | info@noble-caledonia.co.uk | www.noble-caledonia.co.uk



All special offers are subject to availability. Our current booking conditions apply to all reservations and are available on request.  
 Cover image: Fairy Tern.