



36
YEARS
of
exceptional
experiences
est. 1984

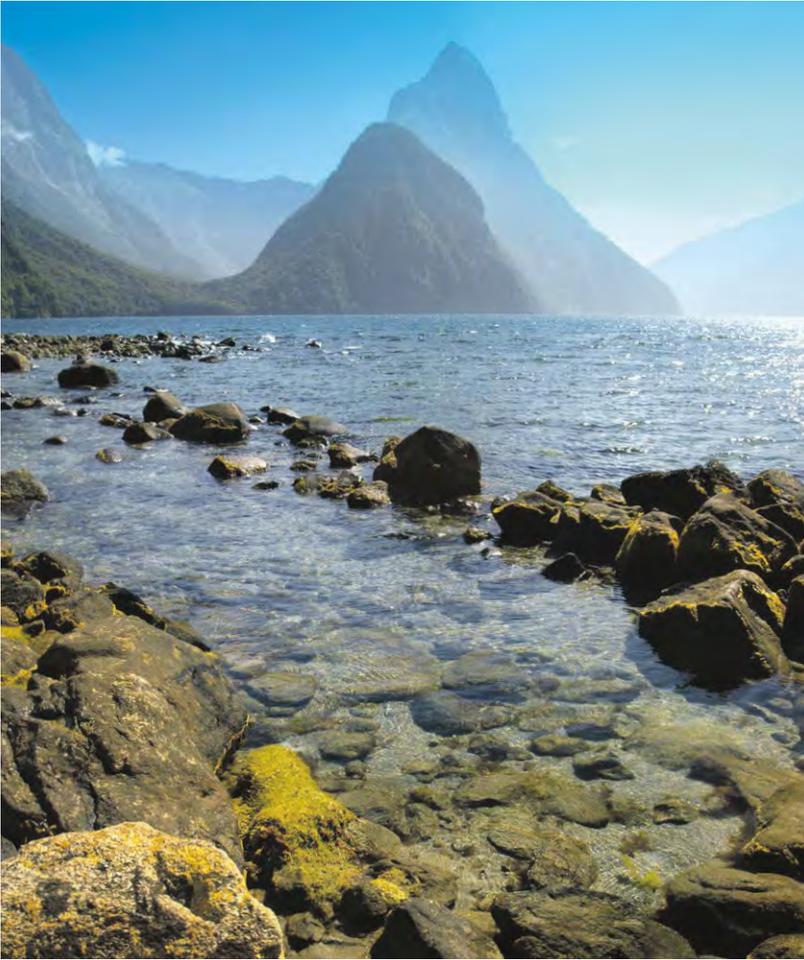


Solo Travellers

Holiday collection 2021

Europe • Worldwide
River and Yacht cruises







Exploration is a gift

Welcome to our Solo Traveller collection of tours and river cruises. We believe that exploring the world is one of life's gifts. A holiday is not just about the destination, it's about new experiences and the bonds that are made along the way. We bring people, places and culture together to create lasting memories.

Whether it's seeking out the Big Five in Kruger National Park or marvelling at the beauty of the stunning Alhambra in Granada, all our holidays promise new opportunities for discovery.

Enlightening visits to the must-see places as well as the hidden gems are always included, many in the company of local experts whose eye-opening insights connect you with the heart of your destination. You'll have a room to yourself and we always arrange an included welcome dinner so you can get acquainted with fellow travellers. On a Solo Traveller holiday you're never alone unless you choose to be.

Since 1984 Riviera Travel has been creating exceptional holidays that offer the very best value. Our commitment to outstanding quality and our passion for our customers have made us the UK's leader in tours and river cruises for solo travellers.

We look forward to welcoming you.

Phil Hullah

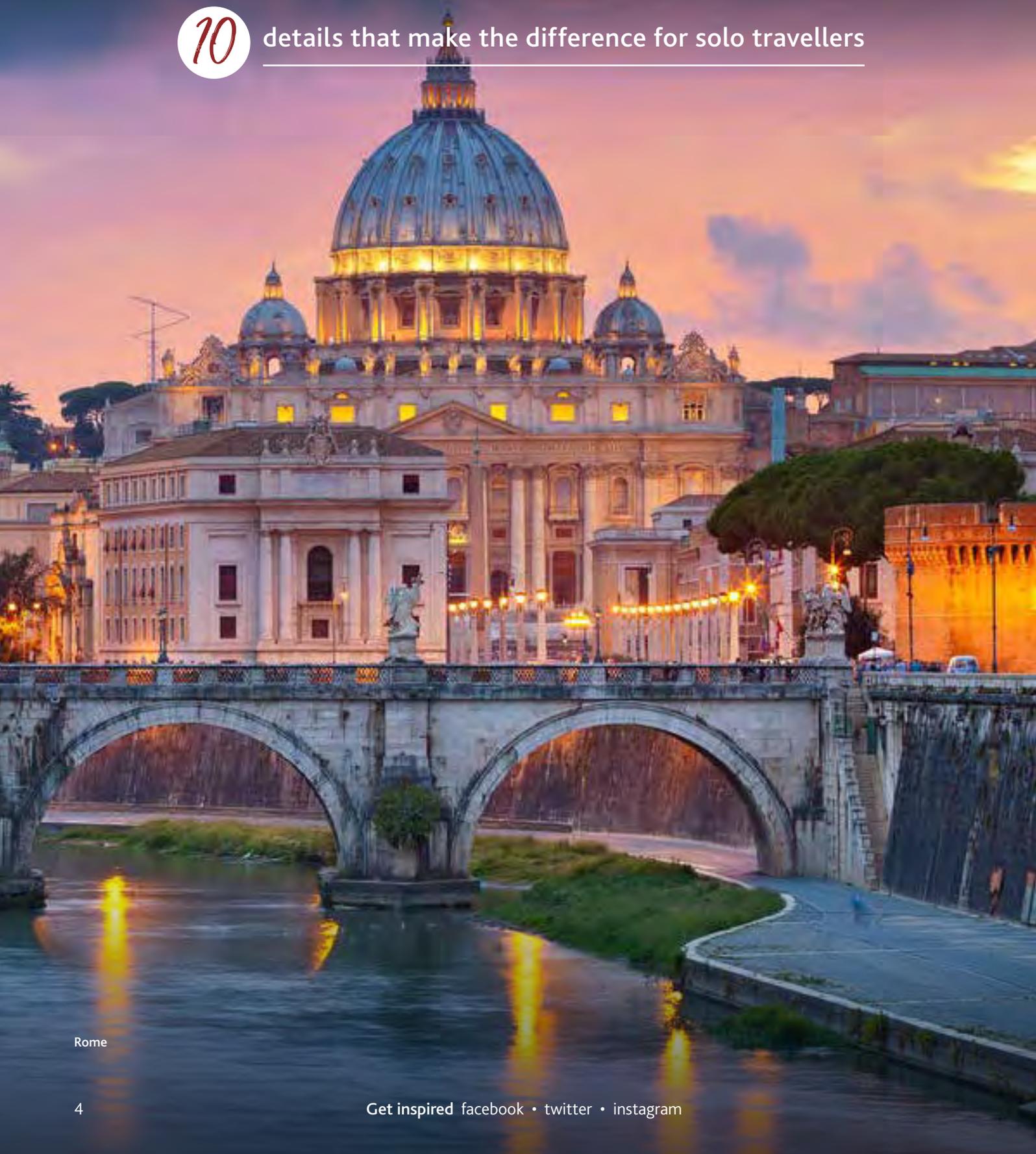
Managing Director



Your holiday the Riviera Travel way

70

details that make the difference for solo travellers



Rome

1 Meticulously crafted holidays

Every holiday and cruise has been thoughtfully crafted by one of our knowledgeable, well-travelled experts. We take you to the heart of a region and provide fascinating perspectives on the culture, history, gastronomy, art and architecture of the places we visit. We also ensure there's ample free time, so you can explore at your own pace too.

2 Hand-picked hotels and outstanding ships

We regularly visit all of our carefully chosen accommodation which is primarily four star rated. We like to work with characterful, well located, private hotels which reflect the personality of the area and offer something special. Exclusively chartered by Riviera Travel, our river cruise ships have surprisingly spacious cabins and suites with everything you would want from a superbly appointed boutique hotel. You will be in good company; only Riviera Travel solo travellers will be on board our exclusive river cruises. As a solo traveller you'll always have a double or twin room or cabin to yourself.

3 The best tour managers, cruise directors and knowledgeable local guides

Our tour managers, cruise directors and local guides are chosen not only for their wealth of knowledge, but also their flair for engaging audiences and sharing special insights. You will be travelling with a friend who happens to know the secrets of every destination.

4 Truly authentic experiences

You'll visit the world's greatest monuments, experience awe inspiring natural wonders and dine in the most atmospheric of locations. We also step off the tourist trail and beyond the pages of a guidebook to show you lesser known but equally beautiful places, all in the company of knowledgeable local experts.

5 Your Options - for flexibility and choice

In many of our destinations we offer you the flexibility to enhance your holiday. You may wish to upgrade your room or cabin or personalise your holiday further with one of our fascinating additional experiences. The choice really is yours.

6 Our exceptional service

We genuinely care about making your holiday the best it can be. Our friendly and experienced reservations team make every effort to get to know you by name and your preferences by heart. They are not restrained by targets, they just offer superb customer service, the way it should be.

7 Unbeatable value

Our holidays offer truly incredible value. We include return travel from the UK, UK airport lounge access on all holidays by air, overseas transfers, accommodation with daily breakfast and a welcome dinner, services of a tour manager and insightful guided tours and visits. Dependant on the destination, lunches and additional dinners are often included too. For your convenience we have also arranged portorage at the majority of our hotels.

8 Award-winning reputation

Since our inception in 1984, we have been consistently recognised for outstanding service, value and quality. For seven years Which? has awarded us the highly coveted Recommended Provider status. According to independent holiday review site Reevoo over 99% of respondents would also travel with Riviera Travel again.



9 Peace of mind

Our tour managers and cruise directors are with you throughout your holiday to ensure your experience is exceptional. You can always seek their assistance or call our dedicated 24-hour helpline to speak to a member of our team in the UK.

10 Our unique price promise

We guarantee there are never any hidden surcharges or fees to be added later, so the cost will not increase no matter what happens after you book. What's more we don't automatically include gratuities, so the choice is entirely yours.

And of course

All our holidays are fully bonded by ABTA, ATOL and IATA for your complete peace of mind. Your money is fully protected.



We're so proud of our independent review scores from customers.



Connecting you to the world

We do the hard work to deliver adventures effortlessly

Our expertise is a key ingredient in ensuring the success of our holidays for solo travellers.

Everyone, from the product specialists and our reservations experts, to the tour managers, cruise directors and local guides, go the extra mile so your holiday experience is second to none.

Unrivalled knowledge and experience

The team really do go the extra mile. We go all over looking for that something special. We genuinely want to give our customers the best holidays.

Joanne
Head of Product



Every Riviera Travel holiday for solo travellers has been thoughtfully planned and crafted by our specialists.

They draw on their own extensive travel experience and the guidance and expertise of our local partners to create superb holidays.

Our specialists are committed to making every aspect smooth and enjoyable; they genuinely want to ensure that the holidays they create leave you with wonderful lasting memories.

Don't just take our word for it

“Despite my initial apprehension, as this was my first solo trip, I embraced this entire experience, and highly recommend this tour and company to others, and I can't wait to book my next solo with Riviera travel.

Ms Guy - Classical Spain

A perfect trip. The hotels and food could not be faulted. I am just looking at the brochure to see where my next adventure will be.

Dr Luckman-South Africa

There is no substitute for getting out and experiencing a destination for yourself. From hotel standards to local cuisine and customs, everything is tasted and tested.

Erik
Solo Product Executive





Seville

Exceptional customer service

Your Riviera Travel experience starts from the moment you speak to our friendly reservations team. Our experts have first-hand experience of our holidays for solo travellers and will help you at every stage of your booking.

They are available seven days a week to answer your questions, give personal recommendations and provide reassurance.

Our solo travellers say

There is something for everyone here - history, culture, wildlife, art, good food, conversation - even time to relax and unwind by a pool in some luxurious hotels after a long day of exploring and travelling.

Mr Graham Whitmore – India & Shimla

I thoroughly enjoyed this trip. So much to see and do in each village and city we visited. There was plenty of free time to explore on our own or with our new companions.

Mrs Linda Hobbs – Classical Spain

We see our customers as extended members of our Riviera Travel family. We care about their holiday and make sure everything is right for them.

Hadher

Team Leader



I have been lucky enough to travel on a number of our tours, I always enjoy sharing my knowledge with customers and giving helpful advice and guidance too.

Jane

Travel Consultant



Explore with our experts

Passionate about sharing their knowledge with you

Historic cities, ancient cultures, natural wonders and unfamiliar landscapes are all brought to life by our carefully selected tour managers, cruise directors and local guides.

They want to share their expertise and help you make your own discoveries too; their sole mission is to ensure you enjoy every moment.

Experienced tour managers

Every Riviera Travel holiday for solo travellers is accompanied by an experienced tour manager or cruise director. They play several roles most adeptly; a group leader who works tirelessly to oversee every single detail and a destination expert able to offer revealing insights into local life.

Knowledgeable, kind, well organised and resourceful – this is how our customers describe our team. As well as a great sense of humour they all share a genuine interest in the places that we visit.

Many have been with us for more than a decade, some even two. For them, being a tour manager is not just a job – it's a passion, and you'll learn far more from them than you would any guidebook.

Informative local guides

The company of welcoming local guides is also included on many of our holidays. They are on hand to share their in-depth knowledge on art and architecture, history, local culture and so much more. Personal stories and anecdotes are sure to broaden your perspective and enrich your experience of the places our local guides call home.

Don't just take our word for it

“Mike, our tour manager, totally dedicated himself to our welfare and went far above and beyond what he had to do to fulfil the itinerary.

Mrs Garlick – Berlin, Dresden, Meissen & Colditz

Not my first Riviera Travel holiday, but the first one solo. A great group and excellent tour manager made this an experience I can't wait to repeat.

Mrs Judith Aizlewood – Vietnam & Cambodia

Wow what an incredible country India is with all the contrast of colour and culture which sits alongside the less perfect side of India. Thank you, Riviera Travel.

Mrs Tutt – India & Shimla

This was my first Solo travel. I was extremely nervous but found everyone so friendly. The tour itself was amazing and the hotel and food great, a lovely holiday and good value. I would certainly travel Solo with Riviera Travel again.

Mrs Betty Cheesman – Montenegro's Riviera & Dubrovnik



“In my humble opinion, people trust Riviera Travel. They feel safe and looked after.”

Jelena
Tour Manager

For me, the solo traveller tours are special as I find I spend more time with everyone. Guests tend to be more supportive and interested, with everybody arriving on their own and leaving knowing a lot more people.

Mike
Tour Manager

My job is not about talking over a microphone or counting people. It is about the story behind every person. Friendship and companionship are the true heroes behind our tours. During my last tour, friendships were made, different age groups mixed, laughter was part of the experience, but above all, the customers felt they were part of a special group without any distinction.

Alex
Tour Manager

“Riviera Travel give good value for money.”

Valerie
Tour Manager

Thoughtful inclusions for our solo travellers

We've taken care of everything for you

Whether you are taking a European city break or embarking on an exciting adventure further afield our team of experts always like to add those extra special touches. Experience our superb service and enjoy the very best of your chosen destination.

Return flights or rail from the UK

Scheduled departures at convenient times from a wide selection of UK airports and Eurostar travel with regional rail connections to London on selected tours within Europe.

Personal service

You'll be met by your tour manager or a member of our team at your chosen airport or, on the train when travelling by Eurostar.



Travel in comfort

Travel in comfortable, air-conditioned coaches. On longer journeys, internal flights or train travel are included to make the most of your time.

Hand-picked accommodation in your own room

Your own double or twin room in our well-located, primarily four star hotels and double or twin cabins and suites on board our luxury river cruise ships.

Hotel portage

Hotel portage* is included so that you don't have to worry about your luggage.

Welcome drinks and dinner

A welcome drinks reception and dinner are included on every tour and cruise, so you can meet your fellow solo travellers.

Included breakfast and dining options

Daily breakfast is included on all our tours and we also include some lunches and dinners, either at your hotel or at carefully chosen restaurants.

*Subject to availability. May not be available for late arrivals or early departures.



Exceptional river cruise dining

Enjoy sumptuous breakfasts, excellent buffet lunches and delicious four-course dinners on all our river cruises.

Experienced tour managers and cruise directors

Riviera Travel tour managers, cruise directors and concierges on hand to share their knowledge and ensure everything runs smoothly.

Insightful guided tours and fascinating visits

Every day brings new opportunities for discovery – visits are included, often with an expert local guide to share eye-opening insights and give you a full experience of your destination.

And of course

You'll be in the company of your fellow travellers on included excursions but there will also be free days and unguided visits, so you can wander at your own pace if you choose to do so.

It's all about the detail

We answer your questions about the Solo Traveller collection.

Will I have to dine on my own?

Not at all. Your tour manager will ensure you never dine alone unless that's what you prefer. A welcome dinner is included with all our tours to help the group settle in and get to know each other. We find that even when meals aren't included, people will still dine together, providing the perfect opportunity to share your experiences.

Can I travel with a group of friends?

Our solo collection is designed to help solo travellers make the most of their time away, and getting to know your fellow travellers really enhances the experience. We find that your holiday is much more rewarding when you travel in groups of no more than two people. If you prefer to travel in a larger group, we highly recommend our regular tours.

What is the likely age range of the group?

While our holidays appeal to people of all ages, most of our solo travellers are in their 50s and 60s, but to them age is just a number – what's most important is sharing the experience of discovering an awe-inspiring destination.

Are there any optional excursions?

While every Riviera Travel holiday includes so much, from a destination's top highlights to the less-explored gems, we offer additional experiences that allow you to 'Personalise Your Holiday' on selected tours and cruises. Full prices and details can be found on each tour page.

Where will I meet the tour manager?

Your dedicated tour manager will often meet you at the airport when you check in and fly with you to your destination. On occasions where this isn't possible, a Riviera Travel team member will personally greet you at the airport to help you check in and introduce you to other members of the group. On all tours departing by Eurostar, your tour manager will be travelling with you and will meet you on the train.

Is this a matchmaking service?

Certainly not. People travel alone for many reasons, be it by choice or circumstance. Riviera Travel solo holidays provide a safe and enjoyable environment for solo travellers to discover the world.

How many people will I be travelling with?

The average size of our tour groups is 30 people although this varies depending on destination, while the group size on our cruises depends on the size of the ship.

Flexibility & choice

Giving you the freedom to
make your holiday even more memorable

We know how much our solo travellers look forward to their holiday and we pride ourselves on the choice and flexibility that we offer to enhance every aspect of your experience.

Whether it's getting to the airport, upgrading your room or booking an additional excursion, we can help.

Your airport extras

Pre-book your airport extras through our partner, Holiday Extras, at www.rivieraextras.co.uk

Airport hotels

Choose from over 200 airport hotels across all major UK airports or save even more by booking a hotel and parking package.

Airport parking

Enjoy fast, convenient and easy parking you can rely on. Whether you prefer Meet-and-Greet parking or a short shuttle ride, we'll help you find the right option.

Airport Fast-Track pass

Skip long airport security queues with a fast-track pass – ideal for early-morning flights.

Airport lounges

Relax in peace in a comfortable airport lounge. Available at airports across the UK.

Some airport extras come with free cancellation up to 48 hours before departure, so we recommend that you book closer to your travel date.

Your travel & upgrade choices

Pre-book directly with our holiday advisors.

Air & rail upgrades

Upgrade to First Class on rail journeys within the UK or to Standard Premier Class when travelling by Eurostar. Treat yourself on longer flights to Premium Economy or Business Class for the extra space and that touch of luxury.

Tour-only option

If you prefer to make your own flight or rail arrangements, we offer a tour-only option (at a reduced price and subject to availability) where you'll meet your group at the first hotel of the tour.

Upgrade your hotel room

Whether you're celebrating a special occasion or you prefer a room with a balcony and a view, why not treat yourself and upgrade your hotel room?



Your options

'Your options' offers you more ways than ever to add those extra special touches to your holiday. You'll find more details about all 'Your options' on the individual tour itinerary pages.

Personalise your holiday

To make your Solo Traveller holiday truly memorable we also offer a range of pre-bookable additional experiences. Witness a spectacular flamenco performance in Seville, indulge yourself with a sumptuous afternoon tea at an iconic Madeiran hotel or take a thrilling helicopter ride over the Grand Canyon. You may even be tempted by an exhilarating zip-line tour through the Costa Rican rainforest – the choice is yours.

Dining choices

A welcome dinner is always included and we have also organised additional lunches and dinners on many of our holidays. Your tour manager will be on hand should you need a restaurant recommendation or if you prefer not to dine alone. Breakfast, lunch and dinner are included on all our river cruises.

Convenient direct flights

We offer a wide selection of direct flights from regional airports to make your journey as convenient as possible. For tours travelling from St Pancras, regional rail connections may be available at a supplement.

River cruise options

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded cabins and suites and purchase an on board drinks package. See page 98 for more details.

My view



We have asked our knowledgeable experts to share personal recommendations for their favourite destinations and you will find these on our tour itinerary pages. Our drawings have also been inspired by all the wonderful places that we can take you to.

Our holiday collection for solo travellers

Discover the world with like-minded people

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The island of Brač

BRUGES

4 days from only £479PP

March, July and September to October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR

Bruges has outstanding art, twisting medieval streets, traditional bars and outstanding cuisine, but when the carillon sounds from the iconic belfry, the ambience is complete.

There can be few places left where you can totally switch off for a few days from the pressures of modern day living so completely as Bruges. Its beauty and tranquillity are outstanding, as befits the most perfectly preserved medieval town in Europe and its atmosphere is totally unique. Whether it's a stroll by one of the canals, indeed Bruges is also known as 'Venice of the North', sipping a coffee in the Old Market Square with the 13th-century Flemish chimes ringing out from the belfry in the background, or perhaps a gentle trip around the town by horse and carriage, its serenity will captivate you and it has something for all tastes.

For art lovers, Bruges is a must – Jan Van Eyck being the city's most famous resident. There are three excellent museums housing many fine works by Dutch and Flemish artists including Van Eyck himself, Rembrandt, and many more. In the church of Our Lady you can see the carving of the Madonna and Child by Michelangelo, perhaps the greatest sculptor of them all. In the Basilica of the Holy Blood is a phial, said to contain Jesus' blood, which was brought back from the Holy Land after one of the crusades. The richness of the interior decoration will amaze you.

Bruges is also very famous for its chocolates, some of which are still hand made from the finest ingredients including cream, strawberries, nougat and nuts. The results are absolutely mouthwatering. They do not do very much for your waistline but they do for your taste buds. The food in Belgium, and Bruges in

particular, combines the best in cuisine: French quality and flair, with German-sized portions. The speciality is mussels; there are 40 ways of cooking them, and of course Belgian chips topped with mayonnaise are recognised the world over as the best there are. But there is no one thing you can put your finger on which makes Bruges such an attractive place to stay for a few days. It is a combination of old world charm, the friendliness of the people (indeed it is difficult to find



anyone who doesn't speak fluent English), culture and perhaps its sheer tranquillity. So come with us and see.

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN BRUGES

You take a late morning or early afternoon Eurostar service with your tour manager from London St Pancras International to Lille, arriving approximately 1 hour 30 minutes later. A coach will then take you to your hotel in the heart of Bruges old town, transfer time approximately one hour.

We will stay at the superb **four-star Hotel Academie** - built around a pleasant courtyard garden, this centrally located hotel is a superb place to relax after a hard day's sightseeing. Recently renovated it offers excellent facilities and comfortable, stylish accommodation, bar and winter garden. This evening we will enjoy an informal drinks reception at the hotel to get to know your fellow travellers in a relaxed, friendly environment, before continuing to a nearby restaurant for a welcome dinner.

DAY 2 - WALKING TOUR

After breakfast you have a guided walk of this beautiful town which really does show off its charm perfectly. The whole atmosphere of Bruges is pure romance and really reflects the true spirit of medieval Flanders. Its streets are crammed with fascination and yet it is so compact that the walking tour emphasises the main sights and attractions perfectly. Bruges has so much to offer and is centred around the main square,

PRICE INCLUDES

- Delve into Bruges' historic past on our guided walking tour and be captivated by its perfectly preserved medieval town
 - Spend a thought-provoking afternoon in Ypres, the epicentre of British activity in the Great War, visiting the World War I battlefields and the Tyne Cot Cemetery
 - Discover the delightful art of chocolate-making with a visit to a traditional Belgian chocolatier, whose exquisite creations are perhaps the world's finest
 - Return reserved Eurostar seats from London St Pancras – upgrades available at a supplement
 - All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
 - Three nights in quality four-star accommodation, inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and one dinner in a local restaurant
 - A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
 - The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout
- * a supplement may apply

Plus, of course...

- Return rail connections on selected departures from over 50 regional stations*



Enjoy the canals in charming Bruges

dominated by the Belfry and when the unique old Flemish chimes are heard, the atmosphere is perfect. You can climb this tower, if you can face the 366 steps: the view is breathtaking. You will also see the City Hall, the old Law Courts and the 'Basilica of the Holy Blood' in which is housed some of Jesus' blood. Another must is the Notre Dame Church which

houses Michelangelo's beautiful Madonna and Child, carved in pure white marble.

Belgium, and Flanders in particular, is very famous for brewing beer, indeed there are over 500 varieties throughout the country. One of the features of brewing in Belgium is the great variety of types of beer and ingredients used, even things as diverse as cherries and oats! So a tour to Bruges would not be complete without a visit to a brewery. Some of you may choose to take the short walk to the 'Halve Maan' brewery museum to learn the ins and outs of brewing in this quaint and very traditional establishment and then unwind with a tasting.

DAY 3 - TYNE COT CEMETERY

After breakfast we will arrange an optional tour by boat of some of Bruges' canals, which gives an interesting view of the town (subject to seasonal operation). Late morning, for those who are interested, the coach will leave Bruges for a tour of some of the places made famous during the First World War. However, the excursion is not compulsory so should you choose to have free time in Bruges, perhaps ride in a horse-drawn carriage, or visit one of

the many other attractions, this afternoon is the ideal opportunity to do so.

Your main visit is to Ypres, the centre of British activity in Belgium and although the town was flattened, it has been restored to its original appearance. Ypres is the home of the Menin Gate, the memorial to the missing where the last post is played every evening at 8 o'clock.

You can also visit Passchendaele Memorial Museum to see a fascinating recreation of life in the trenches, perhaps the most moving part of the afternoon is the visit to Tyne Cot Cemetery – all in all a fascinating and poignant day, before we return to Bruges in the late afternoon.

DAY 4 - RETURN EUROSTAR

Bruges chocolates are known throughout the world and so this morning you visit one of the few establishments which still makes chocolates by traditional methods. They are only made from the finest ingredients and during the demonstration you learn all about this delicious craft. A coach will later return you to nearby Lille to take an afternoon Eurostar service back to London St Pancras International.

Market Square



TIMELESS PROVENCE

8 days from only £1,279PP

April, June and September 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Provence is a feast for the senses with a striking natural beauty that inspired some of the greatest artists, intriguing historic towns like Aix and Avignon, plus the unique Camargue wetlands, stunning Luberon Mountains and spectacular rugged coastline.

Provence is arguably the most seductive of all the French regions. Bordered by the foothills of the Alps to the north and east, the Rhône River to the west and, of course, the Mediterranean to the south, this is a land of striking natural beauty – colourful fields of lavender and sunflowers interspersed with vineyards, olive groves and gently rolling hills. Deep valleys are carpeted with oak and pine forests, garrigue-covered hillsides are punctuated by elegant cypresses... all filling the air with a distinctive Provençal aroma while cicadas gently hum in the background.

Then there's the wild natural beauty of the Camargue. Here at the delta of the great Rhône River white horses gallop across flat wetlands, herds of black bulls roam and striking flocks of pink flamingos fly and land in perfect formation.

Historically, the Greeks visited, the Phoenicians traded, the Saracens looted, but most of all the Romans settled. All have left their legacies, but the Romans loved Provence so much that there are more remains of their remarkable civilisation here than anywhere else in Europe outside Italy.

Provençal towns are a real delight and each one so very distinctive. Perhaps the most famous is



Aix-en-Provence

Aix-en-Provence, its old quarter comprising colourful streets lined with traditional shops and hidden squares sprinkled with pretty fountains that create an atmosphere of cool tranquillity. You'll love its vibrant markets and café terraces nestling under the shade of countless plane trees. Over it all towers the majestic Mont Sainte-Victoire, immortalised by Cézanne in more than 60 works of art. In fact, the whole region has been a magnet for artists including Van Gogh and Renoir, who were drawn to Provence's incredible natural beauty and luminosity of light.

The historic papal city of Avignon boasts a wealth of imposing medieval buildings as well as a fabled bridge, while Arles's ancient monuments are simply breathtaking... not least its spectacular amphitheatre. Another awe-inspiring man-made wonder is the mighty Pont du Gard aqueduct; built nearly two millennia ago, it stands as a testament to the ingenuity of Provence's Roman occupiers. Did we mention the region's wild coastline studded with gorgeous bays, fishing villages and towering cliffs? You'll be amazed at just how unspoilt it is.

All the fragrances and colours of this sun-drenched land are concentrated in the local cuisine – garlic,

PRICE INCLUDES

- Enjoy a guided tour of Aix-en-Provence, the 'City of a Thousand Fountains' and home of artist Paul Cézanne
- Discover Avignon's sublime medieval architecture, including the Popes' Palace and near-mythical bridge
- Learn about the capital of Roman Gaul on a walking tour of Arles, with its superbly preserved amphitheatre and Van Gogh heritage
- Tour the picture-postcard fishing village of Cassis and see the dramatic Calanques cliffs on a boat trip
- Visit the Camargue, the unique wetland region famous for its black bulls, white horses and pink flamingos, and enjoy a boat trip through the Camargue delta
- Experience the spectacularly beautiful landscapes, enchanting hilltop villages and pure natural light of the Luberon Mountains
- Marvel at the Pont du Gard, one of the largest and best-preserved Roman aqueducts

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports or train travel by Eurostar and high-speed TGV
- All hotel transfers, plus portage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation, inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and four dinners – of which two are in local restaurants
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout



olive oil, fresh seafood and vibrantly coloured Mediterranean vegetables, enhanced by the most fragrant herbs – you'll be savouring food at its freshest and most flavoursome. Accompany your meal with a glass of one of the world's finest wines, the local Châteauneuf-du-Pape. With so much to offer, from history to art and from fascinating towns to a wondrous landscape all under the most perfect of blue skies, Provence is just waiting to be discovered.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Nice or Marseille, or at the station for your train journey by Eurostar and high-speed TGV to Aix-en-Provence. We transfer by coach to the **four-star Novotel Aix Beaumanoir**, where we stay for seven nights with breakfast and two dinners in your hotel, as well as two dinners in local restaurants. Situated on the outskirts of the city, this welcoming hotel is set in its own garden and has a pleasant bar and restaurant, outside terrace and a swimming pool (open in the summer months).

This evening we enjoy an informal drinks reception followed by dinner for a chance to get to know our travel companions a little better.



Bridge of Avignon
and The Popes Palace
in Avignon

DAY 2 – TOUR OF AIX-EN-PROVENCE

Beautiful Aix-en-Provence seamlessly combines Parisian-style chic with village-like gentility. Founded as a spa town by the Romans, it became the capital of Provence during the Middle Ages and evolved into a major educational and artistic hub. Aix is known as the 'City of a Thousand Fountains' and the tranquil sound of running water accompanies you down colourful boulevards, through fine squares and labyrinthine alleyways. During a morning guided walking tour, you'll see what inspired the city's favourite son, Paul Cézanne, to produce numerous paintings in and around Aix. The afternoon is yours to spend as you wish in this wonderful Provençal city, perhaps taking the opportunity to visit Cézanne's perfectly preserved workshop.

DAY 3 – THE CAMARGUE

After breakfast we head to the Camargue, the delta of the great Rhône River and a beguiling landscape of flat saltwater marshland teeming with around 400 species of birds – including remarkable pink flamingos. This designated national park is also home to the region's iconic black bulls and an ancient breed of white horse, some of which you may spot being ridden by the Camargue's famous 'cowboys'. We arrive at the small port town of Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer and take a guided boat trip to explore the natural splendour of this wetland environment – don't forget to bring your binoculars.

We then make the short trip to extraordinary Arles, a prosperous Roman regional capital from the 1st century AD. We marvel at the city's impressive UNESCO-listed monuments on a fascinating walking tour, taking in the incredibly well-preserved Roman amphitheatre and the theatre built by the Emperor Augustus. We also see the Place du Forum, once the Roman city's heart and now a thriving square with vibrant cafés and restaurants. There's free time to spend in Arles, perhaps to seek out locations associated with Vincent Van Gogh, who spent 14 months here from early 1888. It was his most prolific period and, inspired by Arles and the light and beauty of the Provençal countryside, he produced around 300 works, including *The Café Terrace at Night*, *The Sower* and, of course, *Sunflowers*.

DAY 4 – LUBERON MOUNTAINS

This morning we travel north to the stunning Luberon Mountains. The region's pure natural light has always attracted artists, while the hilltops are crowned by enchanting villages that, at a distance, appear frozen in medieval times, yet are alive with vibrant bistros, rustic restaurants and markets selling fabulous local produce. The landscape in this designated Regional Nature Park changes dramatically from flat plains dotted with olive and peach groves to sloping vineyards and then, higher up, rows of lavender whose fragrance mingles with pine and wild herbs to give the unmistakable aroma of rural Provence.

DAY 5 – AVIGNON

Today we visit historic Avignon, whose destiny changed in the 14th century when the Pope's court was exiled here from Rome. Vast wealth poured in to build churches, convents and elegant townhouses, but especially the incredible Popes' Palace. You'll have time to explore this imposing palace – one of Europe's largest Gothic buildings – which resembles a citadel rising from living rock, flanked by towering turrets. Alternatively, you could visit the Petit Palais Museum, which houses an excellent collection of more than 300 paintings from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, while a walk on the city's celebrated 12th-century bridge will have you singing a certain French song for the rest of the day.

We return to Aix via the Pont du Gard, an aqueduct constructed in the 1st century AD as part of a 30-mile route supplying water to the Roman city of Nîmes. The three-tiered, arched structure measures over 900 feet in length and almost 160 feet in height; stand back to absorb the beauty of this engineering masterpiece and you'll understand why it's considered a wonder of the ancient world.

DAY 6 – FREE DAY IN AIX

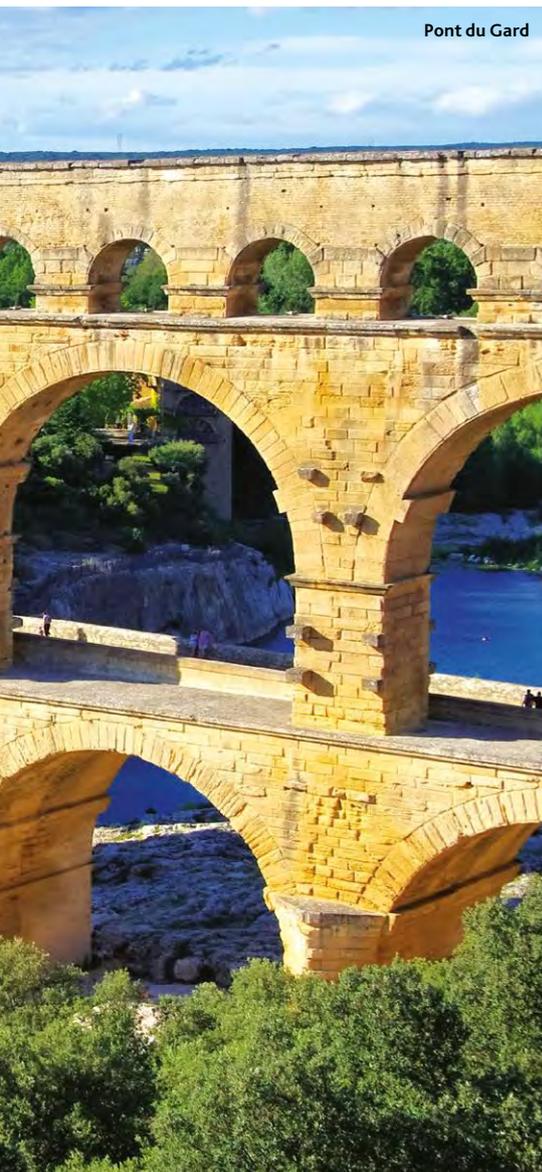
A free day to spend as you wish in Aix. Wander along Cours Mirabeau, Aix's elegant main street, and peel off into the maze of lanes to discover tiny squares and myriad fountains. Alternatively visit the superb Musée Granet and its collection of works by Cézanne,



Camargue



Pont du Gard



Degas, Picasso, Matisse and Monet, or the fascinating Museum of Natural History, where you can view a collection of dinosaur eggs unearthed on the slopes of nearby Mont Sainte-Victoire.

DAY 7 – CASSIS

An invigorating trip by the sea today as we head to the rugged coast and the lovely fishing port of Cassis whose painted cottages, charming little harbour and sandy beach are all overlooked by a mighty medieval fortress. Situated in a spectacular bay, the town has attracted numerous famous visitors over the years

– including Virginia Woolf and Sir Winston Churchill, who took painting lessons here in the 1920s. Choose one of the many waterside restaurants for a lunch of freshly caught fish before taking an afternoon boat trip to see the Massif des Calanques, a rugged coastline of dazzling white cliffs, rock pinnacles and rare seabirds.

DAY 8 – RETURN HOME

Transfer to the airport or station for your flight or train home.

Cassis



BERLIN, DRESDEN, MEISSEN & COLDITZ

5 days from only £829PP

April, June and September 2021

TWO-CENTRE TOUR

Berlin and Dresden have both endured violent interludes to a glittering cultural history, now returned to their former glory, continuing an incredibly thought-provoking journey.

On this intriguingly varied tour, we experience two of Europe's greatest cultural cities, Berlin and Dresden. Both have endured violent interludes in otherwise glittering histories and have now returned to their former glory at the heart of 21st-century Europe. The outpouring of joy and energy that accompanied the fall of the Berlin Wall nearly 30 years ago rekindled Berlin's legendary vibrancy, and this modern city throbs with new life while doffing its cap respectfully to the past. Iconic locations abound – from Checkpoint Charlie with its spy stories, to the magnificent avenue of Unter den Linden with its many cafés and museums. Here we also see the Brandenburg Gate and the instantly recognisable Reichstag, symbol of the new Germany. Perhaps more sedate than Berlin, Dresden is a cultural jewel reborn as a beacon of hope and peace, revelling in the renewed splendour of its architecture, opera and museums. Before the last war it was Germany's most beautiful city thanks to its imposing Baroque buildings and many art treasures. After huge bomb damage, Dresden has been almost completely restored as part of an extraordinary restoration project spanning 60 years – and the results are breathtaking. But there is much more to this tour than these two re-energised cities as we experience Germany's traditional side through its rolling countryside, small towns and

picturesque villages. There will also be reminders of old East Germany, including an occasional Trabant, the still sought-after car that is so associated with the period. We explore the medieval town of Meissen, where highly skilled artisans craft exquisite porcelain in the only factory in Europe where the process is still completed entirely by hand. Finally, and in complete contrast to picturesque Meissen, we visit Colditz Castle, the infamous prisoner of war camp for serial would-be escapees – inmates included the legless fighter pilot Douglas Bader. This is a tour that reveals Germany's delightful contrasts, from its vibrant modern cities to its charming rural landscapes, and lets you experience the past, present and future of this remarkable country.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN BERLIN

You should arrive at the airport, where you will be met by a member of the Riviera Travel team before your flight to Berlin. On arrival a coach will take you to your hotel – either the **four-star superior Hotel Maritim Berlin** or the **four-star superior Maritim Pro Arte** for two nights. The four-star superior Hotel Maritim Berlin, ideally located very near the famous Potsdamer Platz, is in the heart of the centre and very convenient for visiting the sights. The four-star superior Maritim Pro Arte is a beautiful modern hotel,

perfectly located between the Brandenburg Gate and the Gendarmenmarkt, and just a stone's throw from Unter den Linden with its elegant shops – perfect for exploring on foot. The hotel is spacious, very comfortable and houses a wonderful art collection. Following your tour manager's reception drinks, where you will be able to mix and mingle with your fellow travellers, we enjoy a relaxed welcome dinner in our hotel tonight.



See why Dresden is known as 'Florence of the Elbe'



DAY 2 – BERLIN

Berlin is an incredible place. Originally two separate 14th-century towns, it has long been a city of contrasts and never more so than in its recent past, which makes it such a fascinating place to visit.

This morning we have a guided tour taking in many landmarks, including Checkpoint Charlie, a poignant symbol of the Cold War when the city was divided between East and West. You'll see the Brandenburg Gate – one of Germany's most iconic landmarks – and the Reichstag, the parliament of the reunified Germany that is steeped in history and partially reconstructed by Norman Foster. We also take in Unter Den Linden, the city's most famous boulevard, the imposing cathedral and of course what remains of the Berlin Wall – now a protected historical monument.

The afternoon is free for you to explore. Berlin's turbulent political past makes it such an absorbing place, but it is also an incredibly vibrant city with a character and optimism to match. It strongly rewards exploring on foot – visit the impressive Charlottenburg Palace and the legendary Olympiastadion stadium, or you may wish to take a short train ride to Potsdam and the Sanssouci Palace, home of the famous Prussian king Frederick the Great.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Discover vibrant Berlin on our insightful guided tour, seeing the iconic Brandenburg Gate, Norman Foster's Reichstag, Checkpoint Charlie and more
- Take a walking tour of classically beautiful Dresden, known as the 'Florence of the Elbe', where the world's greatest art collections can be found
- Explore medieval Meissen and admire its renowned porcelain on our guided tour of the famed studio
- Learn the secrets of Colditz Castle, the famous prisoner of war camp during World War II

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Four nights in four-star superior accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and one dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

DAY 3 – COLDITZ & MEISSEN

After breakfast we drive through gentle rolling woodland and fields into Saxony, crossing the mighty River Elbe en route to somewhere synonymous with the heroic art of escape: Colditz. The supposedly escape-proof castle towers on its clifftop, looming over the town below. Our guided tour and the related exhibition offer intriguing insights into the lives of

See the famous Brandenburg Gate



PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Discover Berlin's exciting street food scene with an evening stroll through Berlin's bustling bohemian quarter, tasting local classics such as currywurst and buletten, before sampling a variety of delicious cakes and candies, and wash it down with a selection from the city's burgeoning craft drinks scene.

The food tour takes place on the evening of day 2 (day 4 in the reverse itinerary).

FROM £46PP



both inmates and guards. We see escape tunnels, a home-made radio, false uniforms and other escape equipment, all ingeniously crafted from whatever materials were to hand. Much was secreted about the buildings and, like the 'radio room', was discovered by maintenance workers after the war. Some of the most moving exhibits are postcards sent by prisoners to their children, whom they were not to see for many years.

Next we visit nearby the town of Meissen, famous for producing the first porcelain to be made outside of China. We have a remarkable tour revealing how, since 1710, highly skilled artisans have created these unique works of art. Many porcelain pieces take weeks or even months to finish, and in the museum you can enjoy many of the splendid examples from throughout the company's existence.

We soon arrive in Dresden for two nights at the **four-star superior Maritim Hotel**, situated on the banks of the River Elbe and just a few minutes' walk to the historic city centre. It boasts a very good restaurant, a comfortable bar, and at this international standard hotel – your comfort is assured.

DAY 4 – DRESDEN

Sitting majestically astride the stately waters of the River Elbe and dating from the 12th century, Dresden is a strikingly beautiful place to visit. It rose to artistic prominence during the early 18th century when August the Strong, ruler of Poland and Saxony, gathered many of Europe's best musicians, architects and artists in his capital. Its pre-eminence as a centre for art, classical music and science saw the emergence of fine Renaissance, Baroque and Classical buildings, the majority of which – though destroyed by the Allied bombings of 1945 – have been wonderfully restored in recent years, returning Dresden to its former glory. This morning we have a walking tour around these revitalised architectural gems, and in the afternoon you're free to explore as you wish. Absorb the ambience of Dresden's many enchanting shops, seek out a cosy restaurant down one of the quaintly cobbled streets, or simply enjoy the numerous talented street musicians that keep Dresden's musical heritage alive.

DAY 5 – RETURN FLIGHT

After breakfast, transfer to the airport for your flight home.

CLASSICAL SPAIN

SEVILLE, CÓRDOBA & GRANADA

7 days from only £899PP

March to June and September to November 2021

MULTI-CENTRE TOUR



Experience Andalucía's magical fusion of Spanish and Moorish cultures as you discover Seville's vibrant streets and conquistador heritage, Granada's wondrous Alhambra and the dazzling Mezquita mosque in Córdoba – and much more.

Andalucía is simply one of the most beautiful corners of Europe yet for many it remains relatively undiscovered. It's a land where the excesses of the modern era seem not to have taken root and where travellers are genuinely welcomed.

Immortalised by the writings of Ernest Hemingway and beloved by Orson Welles, Spain's southernmost region is a tapestry of rugged, fragrant and sun-kissed countryside, covered by green olive groves stretching into the distance under a perpetually azure-blue sky. With biscuit-coloured plains, untamed rivers, deep gorges and the spectacular snow-capped Sierra Nevada mountains providing the backdrop, there are few places on earth boasting such a wealth of natural wonders in such a small area.

Tiny whitewashed villages perch on the hilltops, with narrow winding streets where every house has window boxes crammed with colourful flowers, adding touches of vitality to these sleepy hamlets little changed since the days of Christopher Columbus.

Andalucía has a long and violent past stretching from the dawn of civilisation. The Phoenicians and ancient Greeks traded, whereas Julius Caesar fought here, as did Hannibal. The region is crammed with legacies of different cultures from throughout the centuries, especially the Moors whose architecture adds such magical appeal. Without doubt, the jewels in Andalucía's crown are the cities of Seville, Córdoba and Granada, which have some of the most important monuments anywhere in the world, many of which are designated as UNESCO World Heritage Sites and are protected accordingly. Seville, home of Carmen and Figaro, boasts the world's largest Gothic cathedral. It was from here that first Columbus and then the conquistadors set sail to explore and plunder the New World, and from the 16th century unimaginable wealth poured in, building the city we see today. Córdoba has a bridge with 16 arches spanning the river, built by the Romans and amazingly still in use, and the Mezquita, built by the Moors and so architecturally dazzling and thought provoking

PRICE INCLUDES

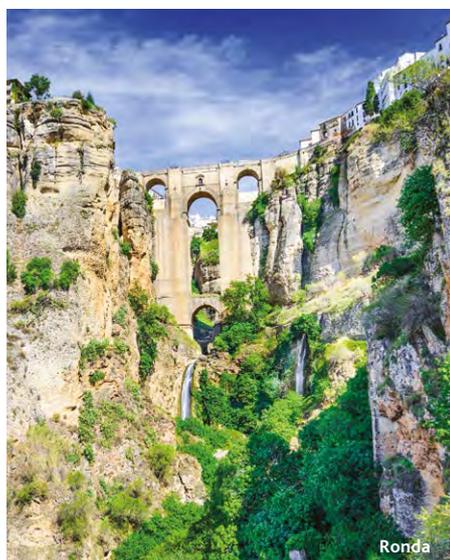
- Experience beautiful Seville's vibrant streets and tranquil parks on a tour led by a local guide
- Marvel at medieval Ronda, spectacularly situated atop a deep gorge spanned by a stone bridge
- Fall under the spell of the stunning Alhambra, seeing one of the most incredible palaces ever built, with exquisite formal gardens of roses and fountains, set against the dramatic mountains of Granada
- Visit Córdoba with a guided tour of the Mezquita, possibly the most beautiful mosque constructed
- In Seville, sample traditional tapas, Spain's delectable gift to the world

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Six nights in centrally located, four-star and three-star superior accommodation, inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and two dinners – of which one is in a local restaurant
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout



Stroll along the impressive Plaza de España in Seville



Ronda

it is beyond words. Granada has the magnificent Alhambra, the fortress-palace of Moorish rulers, dramatically situated, richly decorated and putting to shame almost anything we can conceive today.

Nowadays, though, despite its culture and history or because of them, Andalucía is perhaps the most Spanish region in the country. Indeed, the popular image of 'real Spain' – of ruined castles, sherry, fiestas, flamenco and bullfights – has its roots here. The food is a delight, with the area noted for its seafood and its famous drink, the fortified wine from Jerez we call sherry. Try a glass of fino, a very dry yet refreshing sherry, while nibbling tapas, that great Spanish titbit invention.

The people are charming – always ready to help, with a friendly attitude towards their fellow man and a love of life so typical of Mediterranean people.

So, for an inspirational blend of timeless countryside, iconic monuments, vivacious cities, fragrant flowers and orange blossom, wonderful art and superb cuisine, all set in a region that welcomes visitors as honoured guests, welcome to Andalucía.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN MALAGA

You should arrive at the airport where you will be met by a member of the Riviera Travel team before your flight to Malaga. On arrival a coach will take you to

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Authentic flamenco show in Seville

Witness a spectacular flamenco performance filled with passion and energy in a charming theatre. Enjoy a complimentary drink while you admire the superb artistry of world-class dancers, singers and musicians, who bring to life classics like 'Carmen'. **From £33PP**

Skip the Queue Entry to the Royal Alcazar of Seville

Skip the queues by booking your entrance to the Alcazar in Seville, one of the largest palaces in Europe dating back to the Moorish golden age, and the jewel in Seville's crown. **From £6PP**



your hotel. The **four-star Ilunion Hacienda del Sol hotel** is ideally situated in undulating countryside near the village of Mijas, has a swimming pool (open during summer months, weather permitting) and is set in its own grounds. Tonight we will enjoy an informal drinks reception followed by a welcome dinner to get a chance to get to know each other a little better.

DAY 2 – RONDA & TAPAS IN SEVILLE

After breakfast we take a drive into the hills forming the beautiful backdrop to the coast and then arrive in Ronda, a city widely acknowledged as one of the most spectacular in Spain and which enjoys a setting so naturally dramatic it could be in a fairy tale. Built on a ridge and split by a most impressive gorge plunging down hundreds of feet, Ronda's almost impregnable position meant it was one of the last bastions of Moorish power, only falling to the Christians in 1485. During the 18th century, the two halves of the town were joined by its iconic stone bridge, while another highlight is the palace that was once home to King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella, paymasters of Columbus. With lots of good restaurants and tapas bars, Ronda is a splendid spot to spend a few hours exploring its classic Moorish maze of cobbled alleys, full of whitewashed houses with window grilles. Much of the city's appeal lies in its spectacular views and

clear mountain air – Andalucía at its simple best. We continue our drive into the countryside beyond, which is both very scenic and quite isolated, so much so it is not unusual to see eagles and vultures soaring above or ibex roaming the mountains.

We then arrive in Seville and our hotel, the **three-star superior Don Paco**, where we stay for the next three nights. It is very well situated on the edge of the Old Town in one of Seville's many squares, is fully air-conditioned and has a rooftop swimming pool. Another treat awaits, as this evening we enjoy an introduction to delicious tapas. It is said that tapas dishes were originally slices of bread or meat used by sherry drinkers in Andalusian taverns to cover their glasses and keep fruit flies away. The meat was often salty, encouraging thirst and alcohol sales. Restaurant owners began to create their own snacks to serve with sherry, and tapas eventually became as important as the drink! Over the centuries, with the introduction of olives, tomatoes, peppers and potatoes, tapas dishes gradually evolved into a most delightful tradition.

DAY 3 – SEVILLE

Flamboyant, seductive, fascinating ... Seville is all these and more. It is simply one of the most beautiful and charismatic cities in the world, with the serene River Guadalquivir flowing through its centre, a history spanning the centuries, a wealth of historic buildings, colourful back streets and peaceful parks.

It has its origins in Roman times – the Emperor Hadrian, builder of the famous wall, came from here. During the 8th century the Moors arrived, stayed for five centuries and left a unique legacy still in evidence today. However, if one event changed Seville, it was the discovery of the New World and, fittingly,

Columbus is buried in the imposing cathedral. Immense wealth poured in from Spain's new empire and catapulted Seville into one of the largest and richest cities in Europe.

Much of Seville was built during this time and it seems to have changed little in the last 500 years, with tiny twisting streets and hidden squares where the locals hide from the midday sun in high summer. Today, though, it possesses a vibrant, cultural spirit that is very special.

The city of Figaro, this is the setting for another classic opera, Carmen. It's also the home of flamenco, the origins of which are lost in the aeons of time. In short, this is the essence of Spain.

After breakfast we have a tour of this beguiling city, during which we'll see the awe-inspiring semi-circular



Plaza de España, a fine example of Renaissance Revival and Moorish Revival styles of Spanish architecture. You'll also see the Tower of Gold, so named as it was used to store plunder from the Americas, and much more. During the afternoon you're free to explore Seville at your leisure, during this time you could visit the fortified palace of the Alcázar or the world's largest Gothic cathedral which is the final resting place of the great navigator, Christopher Columbus. Alternatively if you wish, you could take a cruise on one of the many river boats

DAY 4 – FREE DAY IN SEVILLE

Today we have a free day. There are the 'musts' to revisit if you wish, such as the Alcázar, the fortified palace of the Moors with a richness of decoration which will astound you, and the cathedral, but also take time to wander around the Barrio Santa Cruz, the former Jewish quarter of the medieval city, and the smart pedestrianised Calle Sierpes, a street full of beautiful shops selling high-quality leather goods. The Maria Luisa Park is a beautiful display of colour where you can relax and indulge in a spot of people-watching.

DAY 5 – CÓRDOBA

After breakfast we leave Seville and head east to another of Andalucía's classic cities, arriving in Córdoba for our guided tour. Córdoba was the ancient capital of the Moors and is principally famous for a single building – the Mezquita – the grandest and most beautiful mosque ever constructed in the Moorish world. Dominating the centre of the Old Town, which was once the home of a thriving Jewish community, it is a building of extraordinary power and mystery





Córdoba

with an arcaded hall supported by over 850 columns made of semi-precious stones. One can only wonder at the architectural brilliance of the builders all those hundreds of years ago, while northern Europe was still immersed in the depths of the Dark Ages. Another highlight is the immense, well-preserved Roman bridge. Córdoba is a delightful place full of patios drenched in the colour of thousands of flowers – the Spanish seem to take so much pride decorating their homes.

We then continue our journey to arrive in the city of Granada, the last stronghold of the sultans during the Middle Ages and home to the Alhambra, the most spectacular gem of Moorish Andalucía. As we

approach Granada, there can be no more proof of the diversity of this corner of southern Europe. We pass through some very arid countryside with a landscape of dried riverbeds, giving way to rolling olive groves. In the distance is the spectacular Sierra Nevada, the highest mountain range in Spain. The landscape then becomes more fertile and picturesque, with ancient olive trees stretching off into the distance.

Our hotel for the next two nights is either the centrally located **four-star Hotel Porcel Sabica**, in the heart of the city and within easy walking distance of the principal areas of interest, or the **four-star Hotel Alixaes**, well-located opposite the Alhambra. Both are fully air-conditioned and ideal for a comfortable stay.

DAY 6 – GRANADA & THE ALHAMBRA

Granada has a naturally dramatic location, nestling against the backdrop of permanently snow-capped mountains soaring majestically to a height of 11,000 feet. It is the perfect setting for the most perfect of architectural wonders, the Alhambra. So individual in its setting, so rich in its history and so exquisite in its design, this iconic building was the high point in Moorish culture. It is not just a palace, though. Some of it is a fortress, and much is given over to formal gardens full of roses and fountains, giving an incredible impression of peace and tranquillity.

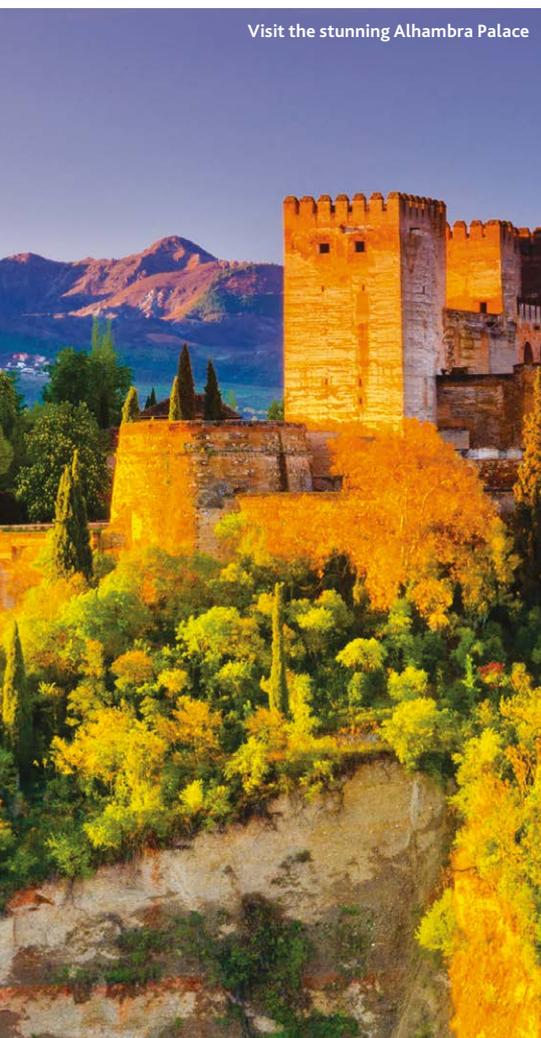


Today we visit the Alhambra, you'll also have time to explore the city as you wish. There is a myriad of twisting streets, the old Moorish quarter and the traditional gypsy area, all full of tiny unique shops, with seemingly every balcony sprouting flowers in a profusion of colour. There's nothing better than taking a stroll through these streets, little changed in centuries, with pavements made of pebbles set in mortar and some so narrow that mules were the only form of transport. Granada also boasts some of the most distinctive old bars in Spain, many of them decorated with antique tiles, where taking a drink and a few tapas can be an excuse for a unique, authentically Andalusian experience. This evening, we have a farewell dinner at a local restaurant, giving you the opportunity to catch up with your newfound friends.

DAY 7 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to Malaga airport for your flight home.

Visit the stunning Alhambra Palace



Seville

VALENCIA & THE ORANGE GROVE COAST

8 days from only £1,269PP

April to May and September to October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Discover Spain's unspoilt Orange Grove or Orange Blossom Coast, from the vibrant city of Valencia. This tour takes us to Moorish towns and hilltop villages, through the Albufera lagoon and into the rocky interior plateau, with the region's lush orange groves as a backdrop.

Mention the Costa del Azahar and most people won't have heard of it. Yet it sits in the middle of the Mediterranean coastline of Spain, sandwiched between the better-known Costa Dorada and Costa Blanca, and looking out to the Balearics. Despite the unrelenting popularity of its near neighbours, this sliver of unspoilt coastline is as far away from package holiday territory as possible. Its cultured central city, richly decorated Moorish towns and unspoilt villages are separated by some awe-inspiring wonders of nature, including the Albufera lagoon and the lofty landscape of Spain's interior plateau. And, of course, the countryside is dominated by the lush orange groves that give this most sincere Spanish Costa the moniker 'the Orange Grove Coast'.

At the heart of this tour lies the incredible city of Valencia, the country's third-largest after Madrid and Barcelona. While the top two welcome visitors in their millions every year, Valencia sits quite happily under the radar, maintaining its authenticity as a thriving Spanish city where local life hasn't been overtaken

Learn to make paella



Valencia's futuristic City of Arts & Sciences is an architectural gem



by the tourist trade. It's undoubtedly a cultural powerhouse, showcasing an impressive architectural mix – from the cutting-edge futuristic designs at the City of Arts and Sciences to an ornate blend of Gothic, Art Nouveau, neo-Classical, Renaissance, Romanesque and Baroque – that will leave you wide-eyed in wonder.

Green spaces are treasured in Valencia – the Turia riverbed has been transformed into a beautiful stretch of parklands that now runs from one end of the city to the other, giving locals and visitors a refreshing respite from the bustle of city life.

Surrounded as it is by the miles of traditional *huerta* or market gardens and abundant orange groves that keep the city's two famous market halls stocked with ripe Mediterranean fruit and vegetables, it follows that Valencia is one of the best cities in Spain for food. It's particularly passionate about being the birthplace of *paella*, with locals fiercely adamant that their version is unparalleled worldwide.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Explore exciting Valencia on a guided coach tour and on foot, with entry to the historic Silk Exchange – as well as a free day to enjoy the city at leisure
- Cruise the Albufera lagoon to see the rice paddies and thriving birdlife of one of Spain's largest wetlands
- Follow a guided tour of the medieval town of Xativa, home of the Borgia popes and a castle dating back to the days of Hannibal
- Visit Elche with a local guide and enjoy a tasting of the Moorish town's date-based delicacies
- Marvel at the Mudéjar towers of Teruel and wander the winding lanes of picturesque Albarracin – both with a local guide
- See ceramic handcraft-making in action at a pottery workshop in the charming village of Manises
- Learn to make an authentic paella at a traditional farm villa, before enjoying the result in its pretty garden surrounded by orange groves

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and four dinners – of which three are in local restaurants
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager

From our city base we'll explore the area's other varied charms, including the exceptional Mudéjar architecture in Teruel and Elche, an exotic echo of 8th- to 12th-century Moorish Spain and a time when the Muslim and Christian cultures co-existed peacefully. We'll also discover the compelling histories and local handicrafts of the region's tiny hilltop villages – and get an insight into how the traditional ceramics of Manises are made. A cruise through the wetlands of the Albufera lagoon and an adventure to the villages of Spain's high, dry, interior plateau complete this exceptional tour of one of Spain's most underestimated and undiscovered coastal areas.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL

Fly to Valencia or Alicante. On arrival, transfer by coach to our hotel where we stay seven nights, with breakfast, at the **four-star Eurostars Rey Don Jaime**. This hotel is well-located between Valencia's

charming old town and the modern City of Arts and Sciences. This evening we enjoy an informal drinks reception followed by dinner for a chance to get to know our travel companions a little better.

DAY 2 – VALENCIA & HORCHATA TASTING

This morning we discover the exciting city of Valencia on a coach tour of its main sights. The centrepiece of this cultured city of contrasts is the ribbon of green that curves its way from the port to the riverside Parc de Capçalera, hugging the historic old town as it goes. Once the Turia riverbed, this delightful urban park is now a series of manicured gardens, wooded areas, water features, whimsical play areas and monuments, all crossed intermittently by a series of handsome bridges.

On the port side of this green thoroughfare we'll see the City of Arts and Sciences, a truly fantastical collection of buildings designed by world-famous local





Elche

architect, Santiago Calatrava. An opera house, science museum, IMAX cinema and aquarium rise out of still pools of bright blue water like something in a science-fiction movie!

Contrasting the futuristic with the historic, we'll also follow a local guide on a walking tour through the old town, where leafy, boutique-lined avenues branch off down narrow alleyways, leading to little squares overlooked by pastel-coloured town houses, and a diverse smattering of architectural masterpieces. Our tour includes entry to one-such building, the Silk Exchange, which is a UNESCO-listed site and striking Gothic marvel. It's not difficult to imagine the city's prosperous 15th-century merchants trading under the grand vaulted ceiling of the interior hall, supported by towering fluted columns.

Just opposite sits the modernist market hall, which you may wish to visit during your free time for lunch. Built in 1928, this vast structure blends coloured glass and iron to beautiful Art Nouveau-style effect – to step inside is to submerge yourself in a swirl of smells, sounds, movement and colour, from the rainbow of fresh produce grown in Valencia's fertile *huerta* gardens, to the calls of traders and the bustle of local shoppers.

In the afternoon we travel out of the city to the *huerta* to learn about the history and production of *horchata*, a traditional drink made with tiger nuts to

create a version that's unique to Valencia. Of course, we also get to sample this creamy, sweet and malty drink, perfect with a *farçon*, a spongy finger-shaped pastry glazed with sugar. Tonight we will enjoy an informal drinks reception followed by a welcome dinner at a portside restaurant, with views over the fine golden sands of the city beach and out to the Mediterranean Sea.

DAY 3 – ELCHE

This morning we drive south to Elche, which sits slightly inland just beyond Alicante. Elche is especially interesting for its cultural fusion, merging the Moorish legacy of the 10th-century Arab occupiers with additions from the Christian conquerors who ousted them from their Vila Murada home three centuries later. During our guided tour we'll see this evocative east-meets-west amalgamation, illustrated perfectly by the ornate Spanish-Baroque Basilica de Santa Maria, which sits between the Arab fortresses of Calaforra and Altamira.

This cultural diversity is also displayed in the natural areas for which Elche is renowned, as the Vila Murada historic centre is caught between the Huerto del Cura botanical gardens and the vast Palmeral palm grove. The date palm orchards were planted by Arab settlers and are the largest in Europe. These natural havens give the old town of Elche a 'desert oasis' feel that we get to fully appreciate on our guided tour, which ends at the Huerto del Cura, the 'Priest's Orchard' – the most important botanical garden of the Palmeral. Here we'll get to see an amazing collection of tropical plants, including a rare Imperial Palm dedicated to Empress Elisabeth of Austria, and we'll also taste a number of local date-based delicacies.

The rest of the day is free for you to explore at leisure. You may wish to visit the archaeological museum or perhaps learn about Elche's famous passion play at the Casa de la Festa. We return to Valencia in the afternoon.

This evening, we enjoy dinner in a local restaurant.

DAY 4 – TERUEL & ALBARRACIN

Today we travel to Spain's 'interior plateau', a seemingly endless 'stepped' area that rises up into mountains and falls to dusty highland plains, river basins and arid valleys. Teruel in Aragon is our first stop and another excellent example of the cultural medley that was Moorish Spain. Here we see Gothic and Islamic architecture, fused in the distinctive Mudéjar style, and ornate Arabesque buildings. The towers of San Martin and San Salvador are especially beautiful, while the cathedral, with its bell tower, colourful mosaic tiling and splendid interior, is

recognised by UNESCO as one of the finest examples of this unique architectural style. Another pretty Mudéjar church, the turreted San Pedro, hides a romantic legend – the tombs of the 'lovers of Teruel'. The star-crossed couple has inspired artists through the centuries and their exquisitely carved tombs can be found in the church's mausoleum.

Next we visit Albarracin, one of Spain's most picturesque villages. Perched on a precipitous outcrop above a bend in the Gaudalaviar river, this tiny place feels eerily isolated, overlooking the shrubby, rocky hills that rise up to meet it on all sides. We take a walk with a local guide through narrow lanes passing stone cottages, the village cathedral and red-clay houses. At the very top of town, we see the crenellated city walls that snake their way even higher across the nearby mountain ridges. A charming casa gives us a glimpse back to the 17th century before we return to our hotel.

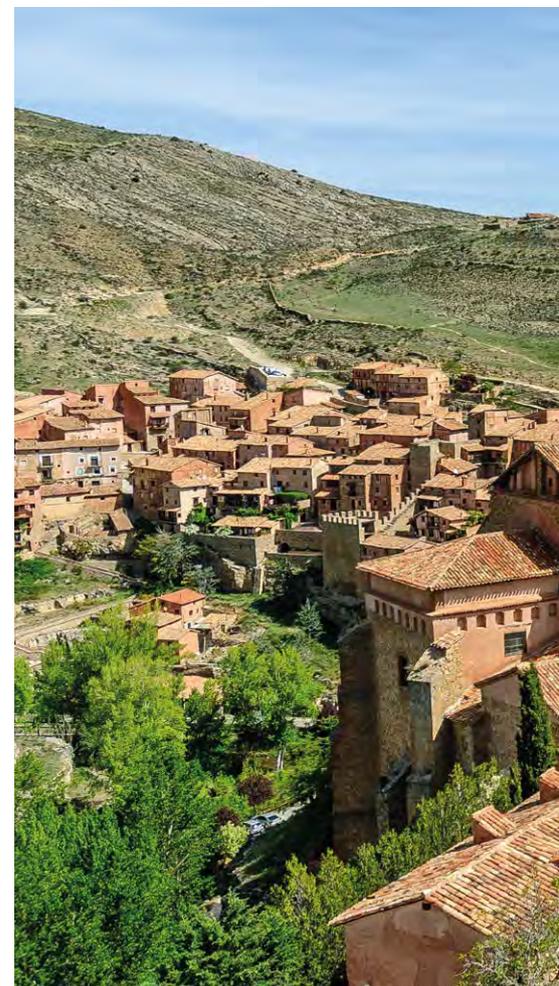
DAY 5 – FREE DAY IN VALENCIA

Today is yours to spend as you choose in Valencia – and there's plenty to see in this large and lively Spanish city. Perhaps visit the excellent science museum, which sits almost skeletal in the City of Arts and Sciences, before joining the locals on a stroll through the Turia gardens to the arched viewing point overlooking the lake of the Parc de Capçalera. If you prefer to discover Valencia's historic landmarks, the Church of Saint Nicholas may have a modest façade but its interior is a wonderland of colourful frescoes that is often compared to the Sistine Chapel.

Of course, Valencia Cathedral is an undeniable highlight of this city's richly diverse cache of architecture. A mesmerising mix of Gothic, Romanesque, Renaissance, Baroque and neo-Classical elements – the result of a centuries-long building process – this cathedral comprises a decorated dome,



White Heron, Albufera



Xativa



a soaring tower and intricate façades. It's also home to a holy chalice, endorsed by centuries of papal use and said to be the cup used at the Last Supper.

A uniquely Valencian phenomenon is the springtime Fallas Festival held to commemorate St Joseph. Colourful sculptures transform the streets and a five-day celebration of music and dancing ensues. A collection of these often satirical, cartoonish figures can be seen in the city's Fallas Museum, which takes a light-hearted look at this lively fiesta.

If you wish to soak up the atmosphere, perhaps over a glass of sangria and a plate of tapas, the Central Market bar is a perfect spot. Sample juicy shrimp, fluffy tortilla and crispy calamari while observing the

bustling market life. Or maybe you'd prefer a plate of *paella* looking onto the cathedral from one of the surrounding smart squares.

DAY 6 – XATIVA & ALBUFERA

This morning we start by visiting the nearby town of Xativa, which is dominated by its hilltop castle that overlooks the surrounding countryside. Its history is long and distinguished, and it is even said that Hannibal stayed here en route to his daring attack on Rome. In the middle ages Xativa rose in prominence as the home of two of the infamous Borgia popes, who became renowned both for their corruption as well as their patronage of the arts. As such Xativa was dotted

with numerous grand villas and churches, many of which can still be seen today. Following a guided tour of the charmingly compact old town you have free time to explore at leisure.

After lunch we head back towards Valencia, but first we stop at Albufera, a large freshwater lagoon just to the south of the city. Here we will take a cruise on a typical shallow-bottomed boat through the tranquil maze of reeds that are a veritable birdwatcher's paradise, so keep an eye out for grey and purple herons, glossy ibis, grebes and even flocks of pink flamingos. This wonderfully peaceful place is exceptionally fertile, with the flat surroundings and abundant water the ideal combination for rice production, the essential ingredient for Valencia's renowned *paella*. We will also stop at a traditional Valencian barraca, a triangular thatched house, to learn about the lives of the farmers of the Albufera and the Valencian region.

We then return to Valencia where the rest of the day is free.

DAY 7 – MANISES & VALENCIA

This morning we visit nearby Manises, renowned for its traditional ceramic crafts. There's a real feel of authenticity as we explore the narrow streets of the quiet and largely pedestrianised old town with our guide, passing pastel-coloured houses, leafy squares and the occasional whitewashed church. The only nod to tourism is the charming ceramics museum, displaying examples of local pottery and the colourful tilework seen throughout this part of Spain. A pottery workshop visit is followed by free time for lunch – perhaps join the locals at a tiny patisserie or relax over plates of tapas in a cosy family-run café.

The afternoon is at leisure to enjoy Valencia, so you may wish to indulge in some souvenir-shopping on the tree-lined Carrer de Colón avenue or the alleyways that branch off it. One such alleyway leads to the striking Art Nouveau Mercado de Colón building, a grand construction of shimmering glass and colourful tile, where you can peruse the stalls or enjoy a refreshing drink.

Our final dinner will be spent at a nearby *masia*, a traditional farm villa, featured in paintings by Spanish artist Ignacio Pinazo. Here we'll learn to make authentic *paella* before feasting on our creations together in this beautiful setting, surrounded by fragrant gardens and orange groves.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.

Medieval Albarracin is perhaps Spain's prettiest village



LAKE GARDA & THE BEST OF THE VENETO

8 days from only £1,269PP

May to June and September to October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



An astonishing blend of spectacular alpine scenery reflected in tranquil lakes, Verona's Roman remains and the medieval world's richest city – remarkably unique Venice.

For centuries, Italy has drawn visitors in search of culture and romance; few countries can compare with its prodigious classical origins in art, architecture, music, design, scenery, food and wine. Italy's contribution to European painting and sculpture surpasses that of any other nation. Blend this with the magnificent scenery of its lakes, one of the world's great cuisines and the Italian attitude of living life to the absolute maximum and you have a superb destination for a tour.

Italy is blessed with fantastic scenery and some of the finest is to be found as you approach Lake Garda, where the abundant flowers and verdant trees covering the banks are reflected in an ever-changing kaleidoscope of colour. The picturesque lake with gentle waves lapping slowly onto the shingle shoreline, the stunning snow-capped Alps in the background and a scattering of charming villages all fit together in a beautifully balanced mosaic.

It is only in the past 150 years that Italy has come to exist as a nation state formed from a collection of largely independent cities, often separated by almost impenetrable marshes or mountain ranges. On this tour, we shall visit two of these – the hugely different, but equally classic cities of Verona and Venice.

Verona is without doubt one of the most attractive cities you will ever see, deservedly well known as

the setting for the legendary tale of Romeo and Juliet. Significant since ancient times, it has more ancient remains than any city in Italy except Rome itself. Its most striking monument is the arena – the third largest amphitheatre ever built – where the entertainment on offer included gladiatorial combat. Enclosed by massive and exceedingly well-preserved ramparts, the city has a captivating medieval feel to it with pink-hued buildings, lovingly restored, lining the streets.

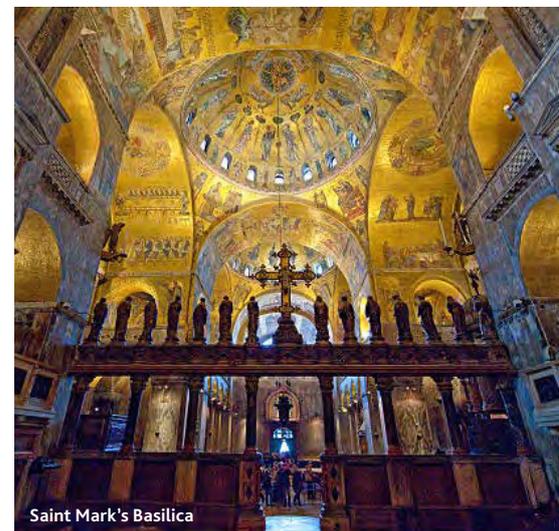
All the enticing pictures you have seen of St Mark's Square and Basilica, the Doge's Palace and the Grand Canal have merely been telling the extraordinary truth: Venice is a stunning city. You cannot walk for more than a few minutes without stopping to gaze at sights which simply demand admiration.

One of the greatest joys of visiting Italy is, of course, being amongst the Italians themselves. Stylish, always ready to help and, perhaps the overriding national characteristic, living life to the full and creating the fantastic atmosphere so much in evidence – so come with us and see.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN LAKE GARDA

You will be met at your departure airport by a member of the Riviera Travel team before checking in for your flight. On arrival in Italy, a coach will

take you to the delightful resort town of Gardone Riviera, where we will stay at the **four-star Hotel Savoy Palace**. This evening, we will get together with our travelling companions and tour manager for a welcome drinks reception overlooking the lake (weather permitting) before dinner at the hotel.



Saint Mark's Basilica



Gardone

PRICE INCLUDES

- Take a guided tour of wonderfully unique Venice with a local guide
- Tour medieval Verona with a local guide and see its classic sights
- Enjoy an entire day exploring beautiful Lake Garda, both on land and by boat
- Visit atmospheric Mantova, the inspiration for artists, poets and composers, on a guided tour of its UNESCO-listed old town
- Enjoy free time to stroll along the Gardone Riviera's scenic promenade, explore nearby Salo or take a ferry to the pretty town of Sirmione

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation, inclusive of all local taxes, plus daily breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

Limone



DAY 2 – LAKE GARDA

Lake Garda first came to prominence in the late-19th century, when visitors came to enjoy the clean mountain air, and it has been famous as an area of outstanding natural beauty ever since. Today we will have a tour of the lake, passing through some lovely, quintessentially Italian villages complete with tiny harbours clinging to the shoreline against a backdrop of mountains.

Our day begins with a drive north along the western shore of the lake to the pretty little town of Limone, hemmed in on one side by the steep mountains and on the other by the lake, which up until 1932 was only accessible by boat. We then continue to bustling Riva del Garda at the northern end of the lake, where we will stop for lunch and time to wander the charming medieval centre with its pedestrianised streets. From the northern end of the lake, we board a ferry for a leisurely cruise back to Gardone, passing between towering mountains and lakeside villages.

DAY 3 – VENICE

After an early breakfast we take the drive to unique Venice; caught in a time warp and as culturally rich as any city can be. We will take a walking tour during which we will see St Mark's Square and its Basilica, the Campanile and Doge's Palace together with countless other places of interest.

The Grand Canal in Venice



Venice first came to prominence in the 10th century and grew in wealth and power on gaining its independence from Byzantium, reaching its zenith during the 15th century. It was then that many of the fantastic buildings you see today were built. Venice at the time was the greatest power in the Mediterranean with an empire encompassing Crete, parts of Turkey and a huge portion of Northern Italy, and it soon created a capital to match. Sitting between the Eastern and Western world, trading quickly grew and innumerable merchants poured their newly made fortunes, just as people do today, into the arts and property, private and municipal. St Mark's Basilica is a must: built to house the relics of St Mark himself, it is Europe's most exotic cathedral with the decoration inside being incredibly opulent. The statistics are staggering – there are over 40,000 square feet of detailed mosaics of every colour of the rainbow covering the entire interior. The blend of coloured-marble columns, gold and red painting, and bas-reliefs combine to create one of the world's most beautiful buildings.

Adjacent is the Doge's Palace, once home of the most powerful man in Venice who, incidentally, was elected for life. The Palace was also the seat of government councils and courts, as well as the prisons. Obviously, the government of such a great power had to be accommodated accordingly. As a visit will reveal, the palace is home to the most amazing wood carvings, an exquisite floor inlaid with exotic woods from as far afield as Japan, and one room alone featuring four Tintoretto's. The walls and ceilings are exquisitely decorated with paintings, frescoes and gold leaf. St Mark's Square itself is a must too and the focal point of the city since its foundation. Today, visitors have replaced merchants and to sip a coffee in one of the square's pavement cafés, drinking in the beauty around you, must rank as one of life's great pleasures.

To see it all at once, why not take a trip up the imposing Campanile tower? Originally built as a lighthouse, Galileo demonstrated his telescope to a sceptical public here. For art lovers there is Accademia, housing one of the finest collections in the world with superb examples of Renaissance work, or the Peggy Guggenheim museum with exhibits by Miro, Picasso, Chagall and Léger among others. One thing that really strikes you about Venice is that it is not nearly as expensive as you might believe. Away from St. Mark's Square, small restaurants offer three-course meals at reasonable prices. But Venice is not just art and monuments, fantastic though they are, this is a city that cries out to be seen from the water and what better way than by taking a trip by gondola. These beautifully made boats are crafted from 300 individual pieces of wood. A short ride on one of them



Sirmione



Venice

is a lovely and peaceful way to explore the backwaters of the city. You will have sore feet when you return to the hotel, but everyone should visit this wondrous city at least once in their lives.

DAY 4 – FREE DAY

Today is a free day to explore at your leisure. You could choose to stroll along the lakefront promenade from the hotel and pause in a café for a refreshing lunch

with stunning views. Alternatively, you may choose to take a bus or stroll into Gardone Sopra, which is home to an impossibly quaint old town. You will also find Heller Gardens, a botanical garden which makes the most of the microclimate to showcase a number of plant species rarely seen outside of their natural habitats. 'Vittoriale', the estate of the eccentric poet Gabriele D'Annunzio, is located nearby and a fascinating place to spend an afternoon.



Mantova

DAY 5 – MANTOVA

Our journey today takes us west and back in time to the sleepy yet achingly beautiful Mantova, a medieval city often overlooked despite its proximity to Lake Garda. Perhaps the answer lies in the three surrounding lakes, forming a natural fortification and keeping Mantova a secret from the world, one which has remained virtually untouched for centuries. As the dramatic skyline of ancient towers, domes and cupolas comes into view, it's easy to see why the city features in two well-loved tragedies: it is the setting for Verdi's Rigoletto and Shakespeare had an impassioned Romeo exiled here.

During our guided tour of the old town, the reasons for its UNESCO World Heritage status become strikingly evident. Although compact in size, Mantova has more than its share of artistic, cultural and architectural treasures. The city reached its zenith in the 14th century when it came under Gonzaga rule,

one of the greatest Renaissance families of Italy. Their home was the sumptuous Palazzo Ducale, a highlight of the city and once Europe's largest palace with around 500 rooms, extravagantly decorated with glorious works of art. Wander the cobbled streets and relax in the lovely squares, where locals and visitors alike meet for a coffee. Perhaps take a cruise on the River Mincio and admire the city from a different perspective.

DAY 6 – FREE DAY

Today you are free to do as you wish, so what is it to be? Take the ferry to Sirmione, set on a narrow peninsula rich in history and famed for its thermal water with healing properties. It's a pleasure to wander the inviting streets lined by pastel-hued buildings adorned with colourful flowers. Or you may choose to relax in your hotel, perhaps by the swimming pool located in pretty gardens. For the more adventurous, you may choose to stroll along to a private beach (additional charge), where you can enjoy a dip in the lake itself.

DAY 7 – VERONA

Verona is one of the most pleasing and beautiful cities in Italy and today we have a guided walking tour to appreciate it at its best, discovering its hidden side too. We approach through the centuries-old city walls and when you enter the old town you cannot help but admire the medieval buildings complete with their contrasting frescoes underneath archways unchanged for centuries. Typical pavement cafés abound, some with violinists serenading their clients whilst they take a refreshing drink, enjoying the shade from the warm sunshine. The tiny narrow streets, complete with tasteful shops, are so typical of Italy and then there is the market place, dating from Roman times, replete with interesting reminders of the city's past.

The tragic story of 'Romeo and Juliet' is set in Verona and when you experience the atmosphere here you can see why. The two great lovers from rival families have inspired countless films, poems and dramas and you can even see the balcony where the immortal words 'O Romeo, Romeo' were reputedly spoken. The Roman arena is awe-inspiring but there are also countless medieval and Renaissance squares and courtyards to explore, as well as a superb 12th-century cathedral which houses a piece by Titian. The

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Attend the Verona Opera Festival

Don't miss the world's oldest open-air opera festival, set in an atmospheric Roman amphitheatre. When the lights dim, the magic begins and the most beautiful voices fill the air. It's sure to make your holiday extra special. Please call for details.

From £65pp.

2021 Tour Departure Date

Wednesday 7 July

2021 Opera Date & Performance

Saturday 10 July - Turandot



Roman Theatre is a must too, as are the clipped box hedges and dazzling display of colour at one of the Renaissance's finest gardens. Another interesting site is San Zeno – arguably the finest Romanesque church in northern Italy. One of the most delightful things about Verona is that despite being close to Venice it receives fewer visitors. This afternoon is free so you can explore the city as you wish or, perhaps, go shopping. Italy is inextricably linked with chic fashion and style and Verona has some lovely shops; prices are not nearly as expensive as you may imagine, with leatherware being particularly good value.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.

Please note: Tours departing on Thursdays will visit Mantova on day 3 and Venice on day 5.

Please note: The use of air-conditioning in hotels in Italy is at the hotel's discretion and is normally restricted to the summer months (mid-May to mid-September), depending on the temperature. Where hotels feature an outdoor swimming pool, this will be open during the summer months (weather permitting).



LAKES MAGGIORE, ORTA & COMO

8 days from only £1,399PP

April, June and September to October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



A spectacularly beautiful tour taking in the villages and islands of Italy's most sophisticated lake, Maggiore, visits to Lakes Como and Orta, plus breathtaking alpine scenery, the chic Swiss resort of Zermatt and the iconic Matterhorn

Our desire to experience new countries is as timeless as the beauty of the Italian lakes, which have been delighting visitors for many centuries. Indeed, it was the arrival of the British during the days of the 'Grand Tour' that first brought fame to sublime Lake Maggiore and helped to create the sophisticated villages, nestling like pearls on a string along its verberna-clad shores. Separated from its larger and better-known neighbour, tranquil Lake Orta is encircled by emerald woodlands; its focal point is Orta San Giulio, the enchanting medieval village often simply called Orta. Then there's Lake Como, which has long been attracting visitors in search of inspiration and relaxation – both Rossini and Verdi found their muse while in lakeside villas here. This wonderful combination of magnificent Swiss mountain scenery and Italy's tranquil, crystal-clear lakes creates a stunning visual montage that cries out to be explored. It's hard to describe the flawless beauty of the Italian lakes, yet viewing them you'll immediately understand why so many artists, composers and writers have sought peace and inspiration here. The heady mix of



serene waters, forest-clad hillsides, medieval villages, orange-blossom-scented warm air and delicious food make them an irresistible destination. We explore not only Lake Maggiore, which straddles both Italy and Switzerland, but also the equally beautiful Lake Como and lesser-known Lake Orta, one of the most spellbinding places you'll ever visit. With the arc of the imposing Alps stretching out along the horizon, you'll enjoy arguably the finest mountain scenery on the planet during your visit to Switzerland –dramatic Zermatt, nestling at the base of the world's most mesmerising peak, the mighty Matterhorn. Then there are the delightful lost valleys, tumbling glacier streams and classic chalet scenes that, when blended together, offer a truly inspirational tour.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN BAVENO

Arrive at the airport for your flight. Upon arrival we transfer by coach to Baveno, a quiet town on the idyllic shores of Lake Maggiore. Our hotel for seven nights, with breakfast and dinner, is the historic **four-star Hotel Simplon**. Set in its own park land, the



Isola Bella

hotel has an outdoor pool in the park (open during the summer months, weather permitting). Guests can use the indoor pool, spa and gym of Hotel Dino, the sister hotel connected via a tunnel that doubles as an art gallery. This evening we enjoy an informal drinks reception followed by dinner for a chance to get to know our travel companions a little better.

DAY 2 – LAKE MAGGIORE & BORROMEAN ISLANDS

Our morning is spent revelling in the myriad charms of Lake Maggiore. It's one of Italy's best natural treasures, with breathtaking views, lush hills in the south and mountains in the north. Unmistakably Mediterranean in character, its green shores are brightened by oleanders, palms and deeply aromatic verbena, while its waters reflect the azure sky above. We take a relaxing cruise to the ravishing Borromeo Islands, named after the noble Borromeo family to whom they have belonged since the 12th century. The first island we call at is Isola Bella for a guided tour of its Baroque palazzo and terraced gardens. Named

PRICE INCLUDES

- Cruise to the enchanting Borromeo Islands and visit Isola dei Pescatori and Isola Bella on a guided tour of its 17th-century Baroque villa – entrance fees included
- Travel through the Simplon Pass to Zermatt and see the Matterhorn
- Visit picturesque Lake Como, the inspiration for Byron, Shelley and Wordsworth
- Enjoy a full-day tour visiting Cannobio and the stunning gardens at Villa Taranto
- Visit Lake Orta, one of Italy's most beautiful lakes, and the medieval village of Orta San Giulio

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

after Countess Isabella, the island is an architectural and horticultural masterpiece, attracting distinguished visitors such as Napoleon and Queen Caroline, wife of George IV. The palazzo is a floating chest of wonders, with beautifully furnished halls affording wonderful views of the lake, and staterooms adorned with fine furniture, exclusive paintings and neoclassical stucco work. Perhaps more impressive are the enchanting gardens, whose 10 terraces imaginatively showcase a kaleidoscope of botanical treasures, from citrus and magnolia trees to fragrant shrubs. Fantastical marble statues and a flock of white peacocks add the final finishes to this dramatic display.

Next, we visit the tiny fishing village on Isola dei Pescatori, named after the fishermen who inhabited the island centuries ago. Today, the compact latticework of cream-coloured houses is home to several dozen permanent residents. It's popular with visitors, yet somehow the rustic little island maintains a delightful air of authenticity. Much of the shore is dotted with vibrant restaurants and cafés overlooking Lake Maggiore – many have cosy secluded terraces – making this the perfect place to stop for lunch at your leisure. Afterwards, perhaps wander through the village's narrow, winding lanes before we cruise back to Baveno this afternoon.

DAY 3 – CANNOBIO & VILLA TARANTO GARDENS

This morning we enjoy a completely different view of Lake Maggiore during our private boat ride to Cannobio, the last town on the shore before the Swiss border. With picturesque views at every turn and one of the finest promenades on Lake Maggiore, Cannobio is a wonderful place to spend a few hours. Stroll along the gentle cobbled streets and escape into a timeless world of grand mansions, boutiques and bars. The lakeside Santuario della Pietà church conceals an ornate interior and commemorates the miracles of 1522, when it was believed that a painting of Christ and the Virgin Mary had bled, and a fragment of a rib matching that of the painted Christ was later found under the canvas. If you're feeling peckish, why not stop for lunch at one of the many lakeside cafés and

Villa Taranto Gardens



Lake Como



watch the sailboats and windsurfers skim across the lake?

After some free time in Cannobio, we drive along the shore to Villa Taranto to visit its marvellous gardens, an impressive display of almost 20,000 plants brought from the far corners of the world. Founded in the 1930s, the gardens were the passion project of Scottish captain Neil McEacharn, who had become enamoured of the Italian lakes and set about creating a classical English garden and a botanical treasure trove. Among the many highlights are the 350 varieties of dahlia, ponds of South American water lilies, and terraces of flowers awash with colour. You can also pay your respects to McEacharn at his humble mausoleum, as his last wish was to be buried in the middle of the garden he loved so much.

DAY 4 – LAKE COMO

This morning we explore northern Italy's most famous lake, described by Wordsworth as 'a treasure whom the earth keeps to herself'. For centuries Lake Como has attracted visitors – including Byron, Shelley, Churchill and numerous others – seeking relaxation, culture and creative stimulus from its picture-perfect setting. The famous Roman chronicler Pliny the Younger, who was born in Como town, wrote of the lake's luxuriant beauty and it has inspired some of the finest works by greats such as the composers Verdi and Rossini. The town itself is renowned for its imposing cathedral, delightful parks, grand hotels and the majestic Villa Olmo, which has hosted many eminent guests including Napoleon, Archduke Ferdinand and Garibaldi, the 'father of modern Italy'.

During your free time, you could take the funicular railway up the hill to Brunate for breathtaking views

of the lake and town. The shore is lined by attractive pastel-painted villas, faded by decades of sunshine, with winding lanes ascending to the town's hilly centre.

DAY 5 – FREE DAY

With the entire day at leisure, you can choose to relax in the hotel, perhaps take a swim in the pool or explore nearby Stresa's many delights. The lakeside exudes an ambience of classic belle-époque gentility, owing its origin to the days of the 'Grand Tour' when

Europe's 19th-century aristocracy, having crossed the border from Switzerland, experienced their first taste of Italy. Literary aficionados may like to enjoy a drink at the bar of the Grand Hotel des Iles Borromées, featured in Hemingway's *A Farewell to Arms*, and frequented by the likes of George Bernard Shaw and Charlie Chaplin. Or if you have a head for heights, you can take a cable car to the summit of Monte Mottarone for panoramic views that stretch all the way to the majestic snow-capped peaks of the distant Alps.

The Matterhorn



DAY 6 – ZERMATT & THE MATTERHORN

Today we witness some truly spectacular mountain vistas as we ascend the foothills of the Alps, cross the Swiss border and journey into the high Alps. We take the Simplon Pass, an ancient traders' and smugglers' route which wasn't suitable for vehicular traffic until Napoleon had one constructed in the early 19th century. The scenery becomes more breathtaking, with wildflower-covered meadows dotted with tiny shepherds' shelters, and dense forests crowned by snowy peaks glistening in the sun. If you're lucky, you might catch a glimpse of an elusive ibex, a chamois or even a golden eagle soaring above. You'll marvel at the engineering feats required to build the road as it traverses towering viaducts and jaw-dropping precipices, passing mountain streams and tumbling waterfalls before we arrive at the legendary village of Zermatt. Nestling at the foot of the mighty Matterhorn, Zermatt is classic Switzerland, a car-free jumble of chalets and old wooden buildings strewn along a valley floor of pastures, alive with the sound of cowbells, while cable cars and soaring footpaths weave upwards to the majestic amphitheatre of the surrounding lofty summits.

The ultimate alpine peak, the Matterhorn is relatively unobtrusive until you reach the end of the village and turn a corner, when the Swiss national symbol is revealed in its magnificent splendour – the sight is truly one of life's 'wow' moments! For an even better view, take the cog railway up 10,000 feet to Gornergrat, the awe-inspiring mountain wonderland of summits and glaciers. Alternatively, relax in one of Zermatt's many cosy cafés or take a gentle ride in a horse-drawn carriage.

**DAY 7 – LAKE ORTA**

On our final day we experience one of the tour's real highlights. Orta is probably the prettiest of the Italian lakes, yet one of the least well-known. You'll understand why it's regarded as something of a hidden gem, as there's an exceptional atmospheric charm that's immediately discernible. Surrounded on three sides by deep blue water, the romantic lakeside village of Orta San Giulio has so far avoided the tourist hordes. Its pebble-studded lanes and stepped alleys – lined with myriad traditional food shops selling the gorgeous produce for which Italy is renowned – lead down to the shore and a main square. You'll adore the village's medieval architecture of picturesque buildings with shuttered windows in typically Italian shades of ochre, magenta and light blue, which create a kaleidoscope of colour.

A boat trip takes you to the island of San Giulio, which features an enchanting basilica with an opulent interior containing a spectacular carved black marble pulpit, wonderfully preserved frescoes and a vertebra which, according to legend, belonged to a dragon.

Before returning to our hotel, we visit Arona at the southern end of Lake Maggiore to view the monumental statue of San Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan. This enormous 17th-century bronze stands over 110 feet high and, for centuries, was the world's tallest bronze statue. It crowns a hill commanding wonderful views across the lake and the surrounding countryside.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Please note: The use of air-conditioning in hotels in Italy is at the hotel's discretion and is normally restricted to the summer months (mid-May to mid-September), depending on the temperature. Where hotels feature an outdoor swimming pool, this will be open during the summer months (weather permitting).



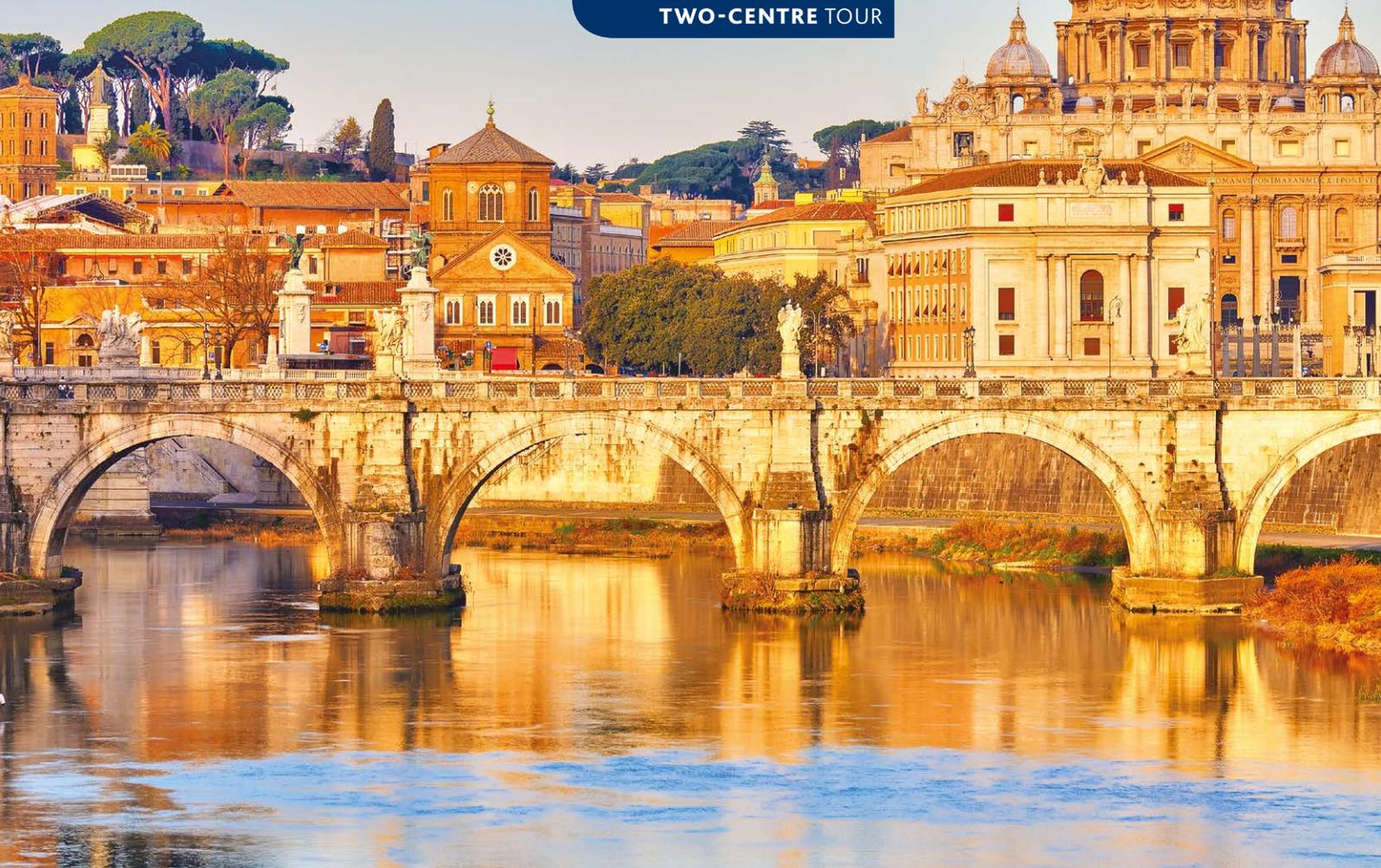
CLASSICAL ITALY

FLORENCE, SIENA,
ASSISI & ROME

8 days from only £1,099PP

April to June and August to October 2021

TWO-CENTRE TOUR



Few places can compare with Italy's art, architecture, music, design, scenery food or wine, Tuscany's striking countryside, the influence of the Renaissance and the world's greatest ancient civilisation.

For centuries Italy has drawn visitors in search of culture and romance with few countries comparing with its enormous Classical origins: its art, architecture, music, design, scenery, food or wine. Its contribution to art far surpasses that of any other nation being home to the most extensive ancient civilisation, the Renaissance, the Roman Catholic Church and the Vatican. Blend this with the striking natural beauty of the Tuscan countryside, the vitality of Rome, the effervescence inside every Italian and you have unbeatable ingredients for a tour.

Firstly we visit Tuscany and its great cities of Florence, Siena and Arezzo, then Umbria and Assisi and finally, the Eternal City of Rome. Birthplace of Dante and the Renaissance, Florence has been described, since its 'rediscovery' early in the last century, as the most beautiful city in Italy. It owes its wealth to the explosion of commerce during the Middle Ages. Principally wool and other textile

industries, backed by powerful banks turned Florence into one of the world's richest cities. Political control moved to the nobility, especially the Medici who then married into the leading royal families of Europe. The city became the cultural and intellectual heart of Europe for 300 years. Artists and sculptors flocked to the city diverting some of this new wealth in their own direction by filling the palaces and churches to bursting point with some of the world's most outstanding works. Michelangelo, Leonardo da Vinci, Raphael, Titian amongst others, created many of the masterpieces now on display in the Uffizi gallery, an absolute must. Another struggling but brilliant thinker found finance here too: Galileo, inventor of the telescope who, on discovering the first four moons of Jupiter named one of them Medici in honour of his patron.

We also visit Siena, the other great city of Tuscany. Beautifully medieval and enclosed behind vast

There's so much to discover in Rome, the 'Eternal City'



PRICE INCLUDES

- Explore historic Rome on a guided tour, seeing the Colosseum, the Forum, Trevi Fountain, the Spanish steps and more
- Tour Siena with a guide, seeing one of Europe's finest medieval cities
- Enjoy a guided tour of Florence and a reserved, timed visit to the Uffizi, one of the world's finest art galleries
- Take a walking tour of Arezzo, one of Tuscany's most wonderfully unspoilt medieval cities
- Visit Assisi, the birthplace of St Francis, and see the famous basilica
- Experience Tuscany's stunning countryside

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in three-star superior and four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and four dinners
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

of 2000 years of civilisation has given it a unique atmosphere. The grandeur of the Colosseum, scene of some of the cruellest acts ever committed, the Appian Way where Spartacus was crucified, the magnificence of St Peter's, the grandeur of the Vatican, the sheer brilliance of the Sistine Chapel, the Trevi Fountain and Baroque churches – the list is endless. Boasting one of the world's great cuisines, far from being pizza and pasta, one of the first things which strikes you about visiting a restaurant, is how deeply embedded in the

defensive walls, it has rural parts even within the city creating a unique atmosphere. Indeed it is more a collection of cities being split into a series of parishes whose rivalries are still in evidence during the twice yearly Palio, the famous horse race where anything goes. However the city is quite outstanding and has arguably the most gracious square in the world, the Campo, and to be fair, when you see it, backed by the soaring Campanile, it is hard to disagree.

Assisi is principally famous as the city of Francis, Patron Saint of animals and one of the most famous figures in Christian history. Every house seems to be adorned with window boxes crammed with geraniums adding a splash of colour to the centuries-old walls. The basilica of St Francis is, as you would expect, outstanding in all its breathtaking detail. Of all Italy's historic cities, it is perhaps Rome which exerts the most compelling fascination. There is probably more to see here than in any other city on earth. Upwards

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Rome Aperitivo Stroll

Spend 3 hours enjoying the gastronomic delights of Trastevere the historic Jewish quarter. The tour includes a tasting of local wines and cheeses, iconic Roman pasta dishes, modern street food and, of course, gelato. Along with the food come some lesser-known stories and insights from the Eternal City. **From £54pp**

Early entrance to the Vatican and guided tour

Enjoy exclusive early morning access to the Vatican before the crowds arrive, while the museum is still quiet. **From £73pp**

Breakfast at the Vatican and guided tour

Indulge in a more exclusive visit to the Vatican. Enjoy a rich American buffet breakfast in the museum's restaurant area or courtyard, and discover the countless works of art thanks to the special early morning entrance. **From £94pp**



culture, food and drink really is. Fresh vegetables and salads, combined with succulent meats, seafood, a hint of garlic and the finest olive oil create simple, tasty, and healthy menus.

One of the greatest joys of visiting Italy is of course, being amongst the Italians themselves. Stylish, always ready to help and, if there is a single national characteristic – it is living life to the full, which creates the fantastic atmosphere so much in evidence.

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN ROME

Arrive at the airport where you'll be met by a member of the Riviera Travel team before your flight to Rome. On arrival, we transfer by coach to delightful Arezzo in the heart of Tuscany and an ideal base for our series of visits during the next few days. We stay four nights



Florence

See the beautiful Tuscan countryside



with dinner at the **four-star Hotel Minerva**, located about half a mile from the medieval city walls. The hotel was started as a restaurant fifty years ago by the present family owners which specialises in traditional Tuscan cuisine. This evening we enjoy an informal drinks reception followed by dinner for a chance to get to know our travel companions a little better.

DAY 2 - SIENA

After breakfast, we drive to lovely medieval Siena which was, during the 12th and 13th centuries, one of the world's largest and richest cities and a similar size to Paris. An unrivalled period of building took place and the range of palaces, grandiose townhouses and piazzas were built. Without doubt the main square, the Campo is one of the most beautiful you will ever see. Unusually half-moon shaped and surrounded by tall, centuries-old buildings, they are all different embracing an overall harmonious and beautiful style. Just to sit here, enjoy a drink and reflect on lives gone by is a real pleasure. Siena's cathedral is absolutely outstanding, one of Italy's greatest, built from black and white marble with the most intricate carvings imaginable some of which are by the great master himself, Michelangelo. The floor is a revelation with countless thousands of pieces of stone creating a unique inlaid pavement. It is impressive enough now but had a planned nave been completed during the 14th century, it would have created Christendom's largest church. The city fell into rapid decline after the Black Death, accounting for the city's astonishing preservation. During the journey to and from Siena we shall see some of the famous Tuscan countryside: this truly a wonderful scenic area.

DAY 3 - FLORENCE & THE UFFIZI GALLERY

Today we visit Florence, pearl of the Renaissance, a superb and beautiful city and deservedly on the map of the traveller since the days of the Grand Tour. During our guided tour, you will see the principle monuments such as the Cathedral – which can house a congregation of 10,000 and the Baptistry – the oldest building in the city. This afternoon we enjoy a reserved visit to the Uffizi gallery, quite simply one of the world's most monumental art collections. It contains work by Botticelli, Raphael, Leonardo da Vinci, Titian, Caravaggio, Michelangelo – the list is endless. Florence is not just about art though, it is a delightful place in its own right. Full of shops and colourful markets which delightfully complement the city's artistic treasures.



DAY 4 - AREZZO

Arezzo is a wonderful medieval town nestling behind its imposing stone walls as it has for centuries. This morning, we have a walking tour during which we learn about the town's illustrious past and there is a host of things to see. The city flourished in medieval times, coming under the rule of the Medicis in the 15th century and today the town is a complete kaleidoscope of architectural styles which somehow blend together harmoniously, with such charm. There are Romanesque churches juxtaposed with timber-beamed medieval shops, separated by intimate cobbled squares. Arezzo's main square is nothing short of a masterpiece and without doubt must be one of Europe's most stunning. This afternoon we enjoy a wine tasting at the Villa La Ripa, an impressive Renaissance villa with a cantina dating back to Roman times. Located in the undulating countryside just outside Arezzo, it's surrounded by olive groves and vineyards, and produces a selection of wines, including Sangiovese, a Tuscan red. The owners, only the fourth family to own the property in over 500 years, will share with us the history of the wine estate.

DAY 5 - ASSISI

Today we leave Tuscany after breakfast driving firstly to Assisi. This delightful medieval town, with its flower-hung streets, lovely views over the Umbrian countryside and fountain-splashed piazzas is famous for a single event – the birth of Francis, the most revered saint in Italy. The man himself was one of the most extraordinary figures the Italian church has ever produced. He had a privileged upbringing, leading a very un-Christian lifestyle, but whilst imprisoned, God appeared to him. After release, he renounced his inheritance, living the life of a beggar, and mixed with lepers, but ultimately found his vocation founding the order of monks which bears his name, the Franciscans. Two years after his death, the basilica was built, financed by donations from all over Europe creating one of the most beautiful shrines in the Christian world adorned by arguably its greatest art collection outside an actual gallery. The building today is actually two churches, one on top of the other with St Francis himself lying under the floor in the crypt. The mood inside is most respectful, being in tune with Franciscan principles – silence being the rule, quite plain around the tomb itself and accompanied by brown-robed monks. We have ample time to visit the basilica together with the town, arriving in Rome early evening.

Our hotel is the **three-star superior Cicerone Hotel**, well-located in Rome's elegant Prati district, close to the Vatican, Castel Sant'Angelo and one of Rome's best shopping districts. The hotel features a restaurant and bar, and the comfortable rooms are decorated in a classic style.

DAY 6 - ROME

Rome is, without doubt, one of the most captivating cities in the world, where ancient and modern blend perfectly. This morning, we have a sightseeing tour during which you will see many of the principle sights and monuments such as St Peter's, the Colosseum, Circo Massimo, Victor Emmanuel memorial, the Vatican, Palatine Hill, River Tiber, the list is endless. Probably nowhere else on earth is there so much history in such a small area. It owes its grandeur obviously to the Roman Empire which held sway over much of the globe for nearly 500 years and then to the Papacy which for a large part of its existence, commanded as much political influence as religious. But it's more than buildings and galleries, there are quiet areas, tiny little piazzas, lovely bars, cosy restaurants where the waiters will talk all day if you



Rome



let them. All this combined gives you the uniqueness that is Rome.

This afternoon you have some free time to immerse yourself further in the Eternal City, the weight of the past is inescapable as you view the magnificent heart of the Roman Empire. Gazing at the Forum, the Colosseum and the Pantheon, it's easy to let your mind wander and imagine those who have preceded you, giants who made history rather than just being part of it: Julius Caesar, Emperor Augustus, Cleopatra and Mark Antony. Take a stroll around the Piazza Navona, Rome's most picturesque square, lined with luxurious cafés where present-day Romans come to see and be seen. Walk down the Spanish Steps as countless visitors have done since the 18th century. Admire the city's monuments, delve into its history, meet its people, sample its food and let your mind be carried away by the city's splendour.

DAY 7 - FREE DAY IN ROME

This morning you're free to explore as you desire. You may wish to take a unique breakfast tour of the Vatican Museums (please refer to the **Personalise your holiday** section for details), the only part of the

Papal Palace you can visit independently. This is one of the largest complexes of museums in the world, with collections to do justice to its dimensions. Many works by the finest artists of the Renaissance are on display, as are Egyptian antiquities and exquisite examples of furniture, sculpture and silverware. And, of course, there are Michelangelo's wondrous ceiling frescoes on the Sistine Chapel ceiling. Alternatively you could take a walk along the Appian Way, where thousands of Spartacus's slave army were crucified as brutal punishment for their rebellion, or admire the craftsmanship and scale of the Trevi Fountain. Perhaps a wonderful finale to your holiday would be our three hour aperitivo stroll through Trastevere and the historic Jewish quarter – see our **Personalise Your Holiday** option on page 53 for details.

DAY 8 - RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to Rome airport for your return flight.

Please note: The use of air-conditioning in hotels in Italy is at the hotel's discretion and is normally restricted to the summer months (mid-May to mid-September), depending on the temperature.

CLASSIC SICILY

8 days from only £1,449PP

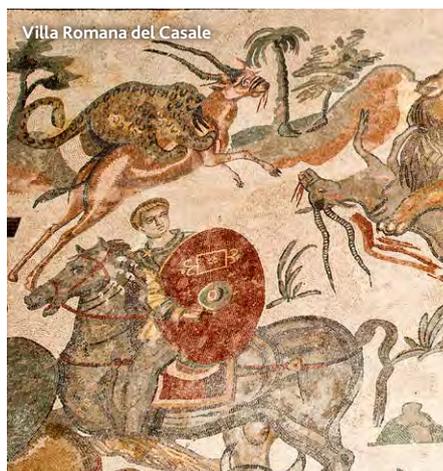
April to June and September to October 2021

MULTI-CENTRE TOUR



Discover the classic sights and hidden secrets of this unspoilt Italian island. From the winding streets of pretty hilltop towns to the soaring slopes of mighty Mount Etna, an incredible history and unique landscape make Sicily a spellbinding slice of the Mediterranean.

It may sit within touching distance, but Sicily is much more than a mere extension of mainland Italy. It's the largest of the Italian islands, but the laidback Sicilians have an identity and a still-thriving language of their own, and life moves at a slower pace. Its position in the middle of the Mediterranean means that Sicily has long attracted settlers from all sides, resulting in an infusion of influences – from the founding ancient Phoenicians to the Greeks, the Romans, the Moors, the Normans, the Spanish, the French and, of course, the Italians. This can be seen in the eclectic collection of historic sites and landmarks, from exceptional Greek temples to a treasure trove of Roman mosaics. Add beautiful Baroque churches and palaces, built after 17th-century earthquakes reduced entire towns to rubble, atmospheric streets and striking modern additions, and you have an island, built on the bones of ancient civilisations, that surprises and delights



visitors with its intriguing cultural collage.

Nature has also bestowed Sicily with a generous cache of treasures. Ringed by shimmering blue sea, its coastline dips into sandy bays backed by craggy cliffs, which lead to a largely unspoilt landscape with fragrant citrus and olive groves, colourful wildflower meadows, dense pine forests and soaring mountains – the most impressive of all being the tempestuous Mount Etna, which simmers ominously over the towns in its colossal shadow.

Its incredible natural beauty is matched by an abundance of home-grown produce. Market stalls piled with ripe Mediterranean vegetables, pavement cafes offering a constant stream of orange juice, tiny shops selling olive oil, jam and honey, green ice-cream made with the precious Bronte pistachios... the list goes on. Of course, fresh fish and homemade pasta feature on every menu, but there are a few

Explore Ragusa's magnificent historic centre



PRICE INCLUDES

- See the historic sights of Syracuse on a coach tour, before exploring the picturesque old town of Ortygia with a local guide
- Admire the beautiful Baroque architecture in hilltop Noto, a town completely rebuilt after the 1693 earthquake
- Visit the Valley of the Temples in Agrigento, where incredible ancient Greek ruins date as far back as the 6th century BC
- Follow a local guide through charming old town of Ragusa, with time to explore the adjacent 'new town' at leisure
- Admire the fantastical 4th-century mosaics at the Villa Romana del Casale in Piazza Armerina, one of the world's finest collections
- Sample the Sicilian 'dolce vita' in elegant Taormina, beautifully situated between a sweeping bay and towering Mount Etna
- Visit a vineyard on the lower slopes of Etna for a tour and wine-tasting, followed by a farewell dinner in magical mountainous surroundings

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports, with hotel transfers
- Seven nights in three-star superior to four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

DAY 2 – VALLEY OF THE TEMPLES

After breakfast we see one of the world's greatest archaeological sites, the ancient Greek Valley of the Temples in Agrigento. Here we find the ruins of seven Doric temples dating back to the 6th-century BC, which remain in excellent condition, thanks to Sicily's gentle climate. Situated on a rocky ridge overlooking

the surrounding valleys and across the sea towards Tunisia, these temples must have dominated the skyline in an incredible show of power. Even thousands of years later the ruins are an impressive sight, especially the almost perfectly preserved Concordia with its tapering columns that bring to mind the Parthenon in Athens. We'll explore the intriguing

surprises here too – couscous from Tunisia and the ricotta-filled Cassata cake, a sweet legacy of the 10th-century Arab invasion.

As we travel down the eastern coastline and along southern Sicily, you'll be dazzled by the myriad cultural, natural and historical gems of this island, and charmed by the affable locals who live there..

DAY 1 – ARRIVE IN SICILY

Fly to Catania, where the mighty Mount Etna waits to greet you, and transfer to Agrigento, where we stay two nights at the **four-star Baia di Ulisse Hotel**. After settling in we'll enjoy welcome drinks and dinner. An evening drink on the hotel terrace is a wonderful way to relax and take in the air so enticingly scented by jasmine and orange blossom.



Gaze in awe at the impressive Greek theatre of Taormina



ruins among the almond trees with our guide and see the archaeological museum before visiting Agrigento itself.

DAY 3 – RAGUSA & NOTO

This morning we drive to Ragusa, a city divided into a historic old town and a 'new' town, which sit on adjacent hills. Following the 1693 earthquake that devastated this part of the island, Ragusa Superiore was built. However, many locals simply couldn't leave Ragusa Ibla behind and decided to rebuild.

As we explore the tangle of sloping streets and winding alleyways of the old town with a local guide, we'll come to the Piazza Duomo, where faded pastel buildings are overlooked by a beautifully adorned Baroque cathedral. Just beyond sits the San Giuseppe

Church, topped with an ornate cupola holding a trio of bells. If you wish to rest over a freshly squeezed orange juice or an ice-cold Sicilian lemonade, you'll find plenty of pavement cafés offering shade – it's hard to imagine a more enchanting backdrop than the decorated palazzos dominating this historic centre. As the winding ascent to Ragusa Superiore begins, the streets gradually widen into a leafy grid-system lined with elegant villas housing boutiques, minimarkets and cafés.

We continue to pretty town of Noto, which sits on a hilltop surrounded by olive groves and thick woodland. Almost entirely rebuilt after the earthquake of 1693, Noto is the home of Sicilian Baroque and its cathedral is its centrepiece – the dome was recently rebuilt after its dramatic collapse in 1996. Climb the twisting narrow stairs to the bell tower of the Church of San Carlo for incredible views. Much of Noto's architecture has an ethereal golden glow due to the yellow limestone for which the town is known – the effect is especially magical when illuminated by the sunshine.

Later in the afternoon we drive to Siracusa, where we stay for two nights at the **four-star Hotel Mercure Siracusa**. The hotel sits between the archaeological park, with its Roman and Greek ruins, and the eerie catacombs that lie beneath the San Giovanni basilica.

DAY 4 – SIRACUSA

During our coach tour of Siracusa this morning, we're introduced to the city's striking architecture, notably the columned Art Deco-style Pantheon overlooking

manicured gardens, and the Sanctuary of Our Lady of Tears with its towering spire and Madonna statue that is said to have wept in 1953. On exploring the cobbled city streets lined with shuttered villas in faded cream, peach and terracotta, you may be surprised to learn that the historic centre of Siracusa lies just across the water. Passing white fishing boats bobbing on the marina we come to beautiful Ortygia, Siracusa's island heart jutting out into the Ionian Sea. This tiny island is filled with more than 2,500 years of history encompassing Greek and Roman remains, Norman buildings and fine Baroque landmarks.

We'll explore Ortygia's charming labyrinth of narrow alleys on a walking tour, pausing at the occasional piazza boasting a fountain, elegant palace or Baroque church. The cathedral is especially interesting as it was originally a Greek Doric temple whose massive columns can still be seen inside. As we reach the tip of the peninsula, the Fountain of Arethusa sits shrouded in myth and mystery. It's unusual to find a freshwater spring so close to the sea, and even more unusual to find the papyrus plants that grow there. A narrow promenade, lined with cafes and trattorias offering sea views, leads to the 13th-century fortress that stands guard against any approaching threat.

After our tour you may choose to take a boat trip around the peninsula. Ortygia's honey-hued stone buildings look especially striking from the water and you may spot local fisherman and egrets competing over the spoils of the sea. Or you may choose to explore further at your own pace. You may find yourself in the thick of the lively street market,



where the cries of vendors, bright piles of fruit and vegetables, and the unmistakable smell of the catch of the day merge to overwhelm the senses.

DAY 5 – VILLA ROMANA DEL CASALE

After breakfast, we drive to one of the most extensive and best-preserved collections of Roman mosaics in the world at the Villa Romana del Casale near Piazza Armerina. During our guided tour of this 4th-century Roman villa, we'll see the Great Hunt mosaic with its leaping lions and roaring tigers, and the famous 'Bikini Girls' mosaic depicting ladies playing sports in skimpy togas. Others tell stories of giants and gods, rural hunts and embracing lovers, providing an incredible insight into the life, culture and mythology of the island's Roman residents. Extraordinary faded frescoes can also be seen adorning this palatial villa, which is so grand that many believe it was the home of one of the Roman co-emperors of the Diocletian era. With columns of pink Egyptian granite, a marble-lined hall and a glorious formal dining room, it's obvious this villa was the home of someone of exceptional status and wealth.

As we wander the atmospheric maze of rooms we'll also learn the history of this UNESCO World Heritage site, which owes its incredible preservation to a landslide that covered many of the mosaics, thus protecting them from the island's earthquakes. The villa lay partially buried for hundreds of years, before its rediscovery and excavations during the 19th and 20th centuries.

This afternoon we transfer to the **three-star superior Albatros Hotel in Letojanni**, where we stay for three nights. This contemporary hotel is conveniently located just north of Taormina and has direct access to the promenade facing the Ionian Sea.

DAY 6 – TAORMINA

This morning you may choose to explore Taormina, a town perched on a jutting hilltop some 250 metres above the coastline, with the sea to its front and magnificent Mount Etna to its back. A coastal retreat merging medieval charm with elegance and glamour, its appeal is such that DH Lawrence made it his home for several years. Despite its typically Sicilian buildings



in pale stone, colour livens every corner of this town. Streets are festooned with flowerpots and window boxes brimming with blooms, while citrus and almond trees dot the squares. Locals exchange pleasantries at street-side stalls, which groan under the weight of a rainbow of Mediterranean vegetables, from tomatoes to courgettes and aubergines. The result is a feast for the senses, as the mingling scents hang deliciously heavy in the air.

If you'd like to shop for souvenirs then follow the Corso Umberto, Taormina's pedestrian-friendly thoroughfare. You'll pass an array of tempting window displays featuring designer wear, colourful ceramics and sparkling jewellery, along with gelaterias, pizzerias

and patisseries. Peach-hued townhouses give way to the Piazza IX April, which looks down the tree-covered hill to the sea. Why not look for a family-run 'minimarket' with tiny tables and sample some Marsala wine?

DAY 7 – MOUNT ETNA WITH WINE TASTING

Today we depart for Sicily's crowning glory, Mount Etna, the highest volcano in Europe. Ascending the winding road, the landscape becomes increasingly eerie and alien, with razor sharp black rocks in contorted formations, and some areas devoid of almost all vegetation. As we near the cable car station itself you can enjoy extensive views over the whole area. We then head to the fertile lower slopes dotted with farms and villages to our destination, an organic family-run winery. The views, in the shadow of Etna with the sea sparkling beyond the green, are truly breathtaking and can be enjoyed from the panoramic terrace. The silence is both soothing and striking, with only birdsong and the occasional sound of a nearby farm to be heard. A tour of the vineyard and winery, which have remained within the same family since 1772, offers a fascinating insight into the advantages of this unique position – here, the volcanic soil and fluctuating temperatures combine to grow a grape unlike any other. We'll also learn how wines aged in chestnut barrels produce a flavour that's different to the more typical oak.

Our tour concludes most fittingly with a final dinner in a wonderful vineyard setting, where local dishes will be paired with the perfect robust reds or fragrant whites. We say farewell to Sicily and new friends, no doubt clinking glasses to toast an unforgettable tour.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to Catania for your return flight.

Please note: The use of air-conditioning in hotels in Italy is at the hotel's discretion and is normally restricted to the summer months (mid-May to mid-September), depending on the temperature.



Valley of the Temples

MADEIRA

THE PEARL OF THE ATLANTIC

8 days from only £1,499PP

March to April and September to November 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Madeira may be tiny, but this subtropical paradise offers world-renowned gardens, spectacular coastlines and jagged peaks, while picturesque Funchal boasts an architectural charm and rich maritime heritage to match the island's natural splendour.

Rising from the ocean floor 600 miles southwest of Lisbon, Madeira is a subtropical paradise that captures the hearts of all who visit. Even the difficult-to-please Winston Churchill was seduced by its charms! The largest island in an archipelago, Madeira has a huge range of landscapes within its tiny surface area, just 35 miles long and 13 miles wide, from sunny beaches in the south to jagged peaks and cliffs in the north. Its topography – a mountainous backbone and plateau running along the centre, riven by steep valleys – was forged millions of years ago by intense volcanic activity.

With fertile volcanic soil, Madeira is a plant-lover's dream with an enormous diversity of species, from imported purple-blossomed jacaranda trees, orchids and bird of paradise plants to its native Laurisilva forest. So much flourishes here in its mild climate all year round, making it a superb destination through autumn and winter.

In legend, Madeira was one of the 'Isles of the Blessed', a winterless earthly realm inhabited by heroes of Greek mythology. But it was serendipity that led the Portuguese here in 1418 when João Gonçalves Zarco was blown off course and set eyes

on Porto Santo, the northernmost island in the archipelago. A year later, Zarco returned to find another forested island, claiming it for Portugal and naming it Madère after the Portuguese word for wood. New settlers were delighted to discover that it was ideal for crops, including bananas, grapes and sugar cane, and virtually any spare patch of land is now cultivated, resulting in hillsides covered in terraced fields and levadas, or irrigation channels. The seafood, unsurprisingly, is exceptional and there is an abundance of fish to sample, from the ferocious-looking black scabbard fish to marlin and albacore tuna. Also popular are dishes such as espetada – beef marinated in Madeiran wine, then grilled over smouldering wood chips. Bolo de mel or honey cake is a traditional pastry locals insist should be torn into pieces by hand and never cut with a knife, while fried dough balls called malasadas are enjoyed on Mardi Gras, which is celebrated with gusto. Madeirans are devoutly Catholic, but they also enjoy a multitude of festa or festivals, many in honour of the island's flora.

One of the wonders of visiting Madeira is that so much is packed in, from inspirational gardens to



The famous houses of Santana



PRICE INCLUDES

- Discover the Old Town of picturesque Funchal, often called 'Little Lisbon', on a tour led by a local guide bringing its many sights and cultural treasures to life
- Enjoy a tasting of the delicious and world-famous Madeira wines
- Admire the world-renowned Palheiro Gardens, exceptional for their variety of flora and stunning location overlooking Funchal
- Ascend to Curral das Freiras, or the Valley of the Nuns, until recently the almost-inaccessible mountain hideaway of a convent of nuns
- See the inspiration for some of Winston Churchill's paintings in the charming fishing port of Câmara de Lobos
- Take a tour of the idyllic Monte Palace Tropical Gardens accompanied by a local guide to help you get the most from this experience
- Discover Madeira's mountainous eastern coast, taking in the A-framed houses of Santana and the ancient Laurisilva forest of the UNESCO-listed Ribeiro Frio National Park
- Explore the varied west side of the island, including Cabo Girão, Europe's highest sea cliff, Porto Moniz with its natural rock pools

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in four-star superior accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

thundering waterfalls and from soaring peaks to the hidden Valley of the Nuns.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN FUNCHAL

Arrive at the airport, where you'll be met by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team, and fly to Funchal. On arrival we transfer by coach to our hotel for seven nights at the luxurious **four-star superior VidaMar Resort Hotel**. Located in the heart of Funchal's Lido area and just a 10-minute taxi ride from the historic centre, the impressive hotel features infinity pools, a fully equipped fitness centre and the Thalasso Sea Spa, which offers a variety of treatments, sauna, Turkish bath and much more (at

an additional fee). All rooms are superbly appointed, generously sized and have balconies with views over the Atlantic Ocean.

Settle in before your tour manager's welcome reception, then get to know your travelling companions over a welcome dinner. Your stay includes dinner at your choice of four hotel restaurants, which serve a tempting array of cuisines including Japanese and Italian.

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Enjoy afternoon tea with fantastic views

Indulge in a sumptuous afternoon tea at Belmond Reid's Palace, an iconic luxury hotel. Admire the splendid views of picturesque Funchal harbour as you dine on delicious and freshly baked scones, pastries and sandwiches with your choice of tea or a glass of refreshing Champagne. **From £35PP**



Câmara de Lobos



Curral das Freiras

DAY 2 – FUNCHAL

After breakfast, a local guide takes us on a walking tour of the historic centre of Funchal, often called 'little Lisbon' as it overlooks a spectacular harbour and boasts grand 18th-century buildings with shaded courtyards. Narrow streets wind through its centre, broadening out onto lively squares and tree-lined walkways. Inspiring sights include the Igreja do Colégio, a church with a plain exterior that belies its sumptuous Baroque interior, and the 15th-century Sé cathedral, one of the few buildings dating from colonial times. It is the island's main religious building and features the original 16th-century altar, imposing arches and ornate gold-framed paintings; its ceiling, made from local wood, is one of Portugal's most beautiful. Devotees of modern architecture will love the Art Deco Mercado dos Lavradores or farmers' market, a hive of activity as shoppers fill their baskets

with the island's sun-ripened produce. Look out for the patterned pavements, typically Portuguese and painstakingly pieced by hand, and for the colourful street art on the doors of buildings.

A treat is in store as we pause for a tasting of the island's best-known export – Madeira wine. The process of heating the wine originated by accident when 16th-century sailors discovered that wines picked up in Madeira tasted richer after the casks had been heated and cooled during passage through the Tropics. Today, the styles of this fortified wine range from dry to lusciously sweet. In between is medium Verdelho, the variety the English traditionally serve with the crumbly sponge cake named after the wine.

In the afternoon, we visit the Palheiro Gardens, world famous for its variety of flora and its beautiful setting in the hills overlooking Funchal. Palheiro was laid out in the early 19th century by a French

landscape architect for the Count of Carvalhal before being acquired in the early 20th century by the Blandy family, famous wine producers. Over the next decades, the gardens were populated with thousands of plants from around the world, from North American sequoia trees to South African Proteas, all flourishing in Madeira's rich soils and clement weather. This is a blissful place to explore at your leisure, taking in all the colours and fragrances, with a chance to linger when a particular specimen catches your eye.

DAY 3 – WESTERN MADEIRA

Today we explore the western side of the island. Our first stop is Cabo Girão and the spectacle of the island's highest sea cliff – a sheer drop of 1,980 feet. Experiencing the views from the transparent viewing platform extending over the cliff edge is truly exhilarating. We next visit charming Ribeira Brava, a small town set in a steep valley carved out by the 'wild river' that gives the settlement its name. There's ample time to explore its picturesque streets and visit the 16th-century church of São Bento with its giant crystal chandeliers.

Madeira's tropical climate is perfect for growing bananas and in the fishing village of Madalena do Mar you can experience life on a small banana plantation, where much of the work is still carried out by hand. Turning inland, we ascend nearly 5,000 feet to the flattest part of the island, Paúl da Serra plateau. This landscape is reminiscent of Dartmoor and the North Yorkshire Moors – a surprising contrast to the mountain scenery we have enjoyed elsewhere. In the distance you can see Porto Moniz, located at Madeira's northwestern tip and our next destination. Remarkable enough for its edge-of-the-world feeling, Porto Moniz is also blessed with natural saltwater pools, formed from solidified volcanic rock and replenished by the waves as they break against the rocks. It's the perfect place to stop, gaze out over the waves and drink in the invigorating ocean air from the terrace of a café or restaurant.

We return on the northern coastal route via the



Visit the beautiful Monte Palace Tropical Garden



Mercado dos lavradores

village of Seixal to see one of Madeira's most famous waterfalls – the Bridal Veil – cascading down the side of the mountain into the sea. Our final stop is São Vicente, a village nestling in a deep verdant valley and believed to be the volcanic birthplace of the island. At its shore is a giant basalt outcrop into which is hewn a 17th-century chapel, while the village also features a distinctive black and white church, scenic houses and a network of caves – all adding to its reputation as one of Madeira's loveliest settlements. After taking in so much, it's time to return to Funchal for our farewell dinner at the hotel's traditional Madeiran restaurant.

DAY 4 – MONTE

Near Funchal is the idyllic hilltop town of Monte, which we visit this morning. Enjoying spectacular views of the capital and the southern coast, it has long been a retreat for wealthy families. The town's landmark is its 18th-century church, the most important pilgrimage site in Madeira, with its black and white facade and twin towers. It is also the burial place of Charles I of Austria, the last ruler of the Austro-Hungarian Empire.

We then visit the Monte Palace Tropical Garden, where you can either join our guided tour or wander at leisure. These oriental gardens are exquisite, complete with Asian-style bridges, arches and a pond filled with koi carp; they also house a historic tile collection gathered from Portuguese palaces, churches and private residences. Later we return to Funchal by coach. Alternatively you may wish to make your own way back to Funchal, either by cable car for a dramatic 15-minute descent to the capital, or if you're feeling really adventurous, you could take the famous Monte toboggan ride. This involves descending the narrow streets in a cushioned wicker basket mounted on wooden runners, steered from the rear by skilled drivers – Ernest Hemingway described the experience as exhilarating. This afternoon is free. Why not relax at the hotel? Or perhaps visit Quinta das Cruzes, the former home of João Gonçalves Zarco, and now a museum whose exhibits offer a fascinating insight into the lifestyles of the island's wealthy merchants over the centuries.

DAY 5 – EASTERN MADEIRA

Today we explore the eastern seaboard, passing diverse landscapes from craggy coastlines to ancient forests. Ponta do Rosto is Madeira's easternmost point, on a sliver of land jutting out into the Atlantic,

and offers dazzling panoramas. On clear days the island of Porto Santo shimmers in the distance. Following the northern coast, we call at sleepy Porto da Cruz, named after a large cross displayed to identify it to passing sailors. Dominated by the sheer-sided Penha d'Águia or Eagle Rock, this 16th-century parish is renowned for producing sugar cane spirit and a dry red wine made from the Americana grape. We leave the village and track the coastline, where, incredibly, every patch of land is farmed to provide food for its isolated communities. There's further proof of Madeirans' capacity for self-sufficiency in Santana, a town notable for its A-frame thatched houses. Made from stone, wood and anything else to hand, they have brightly painted doors and windows and each sits on its own plot of land used to grow food. As you enjoy a stroll around these well-preserved 16th-century dwellings, you get a sense of what it was like to live here when villagers relied solely on their own toil for survival.

We head towards the mountainous interior and one of the highlights of the tour – the UNESCO-listed Ribeiro Frio National Park. Around 90 per cent of the park is covered by ancient Laurisilva or laurel trees, and the area features many endemic flora and fauna, such as ferns and the trocaz pigeon. The region also plays a vital role in Madeira's ecosystem, as moisture captured by the trees feeds into a 1,355-mile network of channels that distribute water across the island for drinking, agriculture and hydroelectric power. Ascending slopes cloaked in fragrant eucalyptus and swirling mists, we emerge at Pico do Arieiro, Madeira's third highest mountain at 5,930 feet. Here, above the treeline and sometimes even higher than the clouds, the vistas are some of the most memorable you'll ever see. You may even spot the Valley of the Nuns way below. On clear days almost all of Madeira is visible, including its highest summit – the 6,100-foot Pico Ruivo.

DAY 6 – FREE DAY

The whole day is at your leisure to explore Funchal. For art-lovers, the Sacred Art Museum is located in the 17th-century former bishop's palace. It houses one of the finest collections of religious art in the world, commissioned for their local churches by wealthy Madeiran merchants seeking salvation. If you didn't take the cable car at Monte, why not give it a try today? Alternatively, a steep path leads up to São João do Pico, the impressive fortress that has kept

guard over Funchal since the 17th century and which offers a superb panoramas over the city.

You can also experience Funchal's traditional craft shops, many individually decorated and offering artisan tiles, wickerwork and embroidery, before a stroll along the Lido promenade and a seafood lunch. Gardeners, already spoiled by Madeira's flora, can indulge themselves further at the Botanical Gardens.

Perhaps make use of your hotel's many facilities. Enjoy a relaxing massage overlooking the sea or discover the natural healing properties of seawater with a spa treatment. Alternatively, relax in one of the hotel's bars and admire the stunning vistas.

DAY 7 – CURRAL DAS FREIRAS (VALLEY OF THE NUNS) & CAMARA DE LOBOS

Our morning begins with a short drive north to Madeira's dramatic interior and the Curral das Freiras or Valley of the Nuns. To appreciate the solitude of this place, we drive to Eira do Serrado, over 3,500 feet above sea level, part of a natural cauldron of jagged peaks and chasms, with time to soak up the glorious views down to the village of Curral das Freiras itself. Descending to the village, you can see why in 1566 the nuns of Funchal's Santa Clara convent relocated to this almost inaccessible valley to flee a pirate attack. Today it is also known for the sweet chestnuts cultivated on its terraced hillsides – you'll enjoy sampling these tasty treats. It even hosts an annual festival celebrating this versatile nut, which is used in products from cakes to soups to liqueurs.

We head to Câmara de Lobos, a fishing village built around a bay with Europe's highest cliffs forming a breathtaking backdrop. Inspired by its location, the colourful boats and whitewashed buildings with distinctive terracotta roofs, Winston Churchill stayed here to paint the harbour during his visit to Madeira in 1950. Câmara de Lobos is still a working port, with boats pulled up onto the beach after night fishing for the local black scabbard fish known as espada. It's a charming village to saunter, exploring the cobbled streets and visiting the simple Saint Anthony's Chapel, where fishermen's wives traditionally said prayers for the safe return of their menfolk. Or you can relax in a harbour café with a glass of poncha, an elixir of sugar cane spirit, honey and lemon juice enjoyed by the fishermen returning to land their catch in the morning – and said to cure the common cold!

DAY 8 – RETURN HOME

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.

Cabo Girão



MONTENEGRO'S RIVIERA & DUBROVNIK

8 days from only £1,279PP

April to June and September to October 2021

TWO-CENTRE TOUR



Discover two of the Adriatic's most resplendent gems: Montenegro's rugged beauty, compelling history and alluring coastline, plus Dubrovnik, described by George Bernard Shaw as 'paradise on earth'.

Montenegro's wild beauty and incredible heritage, encompassing the legacy of the Venetians, Ottoman Empire, Austro-Hungarian Empire and former Yugoslavia, make it a unique and enticing area to explore. Only independent once again since 2006, this small yet mighty country boasts fascinating history and truly magnificent scenery. Christened Montenegro by the Venetians for its imposingly rugged mountains – seen from the sea, the towering peaks appear black – this tiny Balkan nation combines an alluring coastline with a glorious, wild hinterland.

Neighbouring Dubrovnik, described by Byron as the 'Pearl of the Adriatic', is the icon of Croatia's spectacular Dalmatian Coast. The perfectly picturesque old town offers unforgettable vistas that never fail to impress, whether you are visiting for the first time or the 50th. A prosperous independent republic and sea power for centuries, UNESCO-listed Dubrovnik affords wonderful views from every



angle with its Baroque buildings and marble streets harbouring riveting stories.

While Montenegro has been conquered many times, it is telling that the Venetians and Austro-Hungarians never took the starkly rustic inland areas and instead settled the rich coastal areas. This left the bucolic village life of the Montenegrin mountain clans barely changed over the centuries and with little in common with the seafaring traders of the coast.

From its hearty mountain fare of smoked meats and cheeses, to the many traditional dishes left behind by successive invaders, Montenegrin cuisine is appetising and varied. The UN's 192nd country also has excellent but relatively unheard-of wine – little surprise with its pleasant Mediterranean climate and proximity to Italy's wine regions.

An integral figure in Montenegro's eventful past is Nikola Petrović, who ruled Montenegro for 50 years as a duke and eight as a king. Nikola and his wife, Milena,

Relax in Budva on the Montenegrin riviera



PRICE INCLUDES

- Stay in Budva, a beautiful town on the Montenegrin riviera, and in Cavtat on the Croatian coast
- Explore historic Dubrovnik with a local expert
- Uncover the story of Montenegro on a visit to the former capital, Cetinje, with an expert local guide
- Enjoy a lunchtime tasting of traditional Montenegrin mountain food
- Tour the stunningly sited town of Kotor
- Take a boat journey to the Church of Our Lady of the Rocks in the Bay of Kotor
- Enjoy a tasting of Montenegro's excellent wines close to the capital, Podgorica
- Visit the fascinating town ruins of Old Bar
- Take a serene boat journey on Lake Skadar, southern Europe's largest lake, where birdlife abounds
- Enjoy a farewell dinner with a live folklore show

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Seven nights in excellent four-star accommodation inclusive of local taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experience and insightful tour manager throughout

have explored the rustic charm and coastal appeal that characterise Montenegro: a country still off the beaten track.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN BUDVA

You will be greeted at the airport by a member of the Riviera Travel team to help you check in for your flight to Dubrovnik or Tivat. Upon arrival, you will be escorted to the **four-star Hotel Moskva**. Set in an ideal location in visitor-friendly Budva, just a 10-minute walk from the seafront and a pleasant 15-minute stroll past bustling cafes, restaurants and shops from the beautiful old town, this elegant hotel offers all the modern comforts you would expect from accommodation of this rating. The stylish property features a smart and cosy bar, outdoor seasonal swimming pool and small spa, as well as free Wi-Fi for guests. Settle in before your tour manager's welcome reception, then get to know your travelling companions over a welcome dinner. *During high seasons, Budva is a lively and sociable resort that may have higher noise levels.*

DAY 2 – BUDVA & WINE TASTING

The ancient town of Budva, which forms the heart of the Budva Riviera, was founded by the Greeks and fortified during the Middle Ages. This morning we uncover the secrets of its atmospheric old town with our expert local guide. Blessed with a beautiful climate and stunning coastline, lively Budva attracts visitors of all ages with its captivating mix of sand and pebble beaches, sheltered coves, lush gardens and a dazzling marina lined with shiny yachts. Along the seafront promenade are bustling restaurants and cafes, loved by both visitors and locals, with menus offering fresh seafood, barbecued meats, pizza and pasta.

In the afternoon we drive past Podgorica, the understated capital situated at the confluence of two rivers, overlooked by rugged mountains. For nearly half a century, it was known as Titograd after Yugoslavia's leader during communist rule. The first wine was produced in the region more than 2,000 years ago and Montenegro is no exception. To discover this ancient tradition and sample some delicious local wines, we visit the mammoth Šipčanić wine cellar. It occupies a former underground military hangar, abandoned after NATO bombing in 1999, and now houses around 2 million litres of wine. Set directly below the vineyards where the grapes are grown, the cellar is the perfect setting for a tasting.

Tonight, we enjoy dinner together in one of Budva's charming restaurants.

drove their tiny kingdom into the 20th century with innovations including the country's first constitution and currency. The forward-thinking monarchs also increased Montenegro's presence on the international stage by marrying five of their daughters to European princes and kings, earning Nikola the epithet of 'the father-in-law of Europe'. We will learn about Nikola, his queen and the rest of the intriguing Petrović dynasty's impact on Montenegro during an enthralling tour of their former royal seat.

You will return home with memories of the wonderful contrasts of this compact country, from the drama of the immense landscapes and mesmerising coastlines to how the people of the historic towns of Cetinje, Kotor, Budva and Bar shaped this surprising corner of the Balkans. Along with the eternal magic of Adriatic gem of Dubrovnik in neighbouring Croatia, Montenegro offers us a glimpse of the Mediterranean of yesteryear. By the end of this insightful tour you will



Bay of Kotor



DAY 3 – KOTOR AND PERAST

This morning we drive west to breathtaking Kotor and its eponymous bay. Only Montenegrin for the last century, the legacy of 400 years as part of the Republic of Venice is strongly felt here. From the winged lion, the symbol of San Marco and emblem of Venice above the city gates, to the archetypal Venetian-style buildings, there is a strong feeling of the 'Serenissima' in the air. Called to protect the city from the attacking Ottomans, the Venetians closed off the neck of the bay with chains to keep the invaders' ships out.

We make a stop on the twisting road down into Kotor to marvel at the awe-inspiring view of the city, set against the commanding backdrop of towering peaks surrounding the bay. Guarded by medieval stone walls, the city is home to numerous churches including the 850-year-old Catholic cathedral with relics of the 3rd-century martyr, St Tryphon, set against the incredible terrain of the dramatic mountains, and the Orthodox Church of St Nikola with large and amazing paintings. The Venetian-speaking residents of old Kotor were skilled sailors and traded the local resources of salt and silver, incredibly coveted in medieval times, bringing prosperity to the city. Strolling around the narrow lanes with your local guide, spare a moment for the city's feline residents: they saved the city, then named Cattaro, from the plague by catching the disease-transmitting mice, and became unofficial mascots of the city.

You have a wide range of cafes and restaurants in Kotor to choose from at lunch time, before we

continue to the captivating town of Perast. Flanked by rugged mountain scenery on one side and the placid waters of the bay on the other, this lovely, small town is known for the two church islands just off the shore. We take a short boat ride to the man-made Our Lady of the Rocks island, shaped like a boat. Local legend states it was started by a wounded sailor, who was healed after finding the Virgin Mary's image on a rock and dedicated himself to making a church in her honour. The island's small Catholic church is resplendent with art, including many Baroque works by famous 17th-

century local artist, Tripo Kokolja, and countless silver votive tablets from sailors grateful for salvation on the seas. Upstairs the tiny museum is crammed with treasures, including a masterpiece painted by Kokolja at only 14 years of age and a tapestry worked on for 25 years by a local woman waiting for her husband to return from sea. Amongst the gold and silver threads, she added her own hair and finally became blind from the years of dedicated work.

After a truly memorable day, we return to the hotel for dinner.



Church of Our Lady of the Rocks



DAY 4 – CETINJE & FOOD TASTING

After a buffet breakfast at the hotel, we head to Cetinje, the former capital of Montenegro and royal seat of the ruling Petrović family. On our journey, we pass through rugged mountains covered with pine forests and dotted with idyllic, smallholdings – take in the quintessential Montenegrin landscapes as eagles swoop overhead. Attractive Cetinje is home to fewer than 15,000 people now but is replete with signs of its prestigious past status as capital, with ornate former embassies and traditional-style public buildings.

We visit King Nikola's Museum, located off the charming main square with its al fresco café culture. This huge burgundy building gives little away from the outside of the fascinating artefacts within. Learn the incredible story of this tiny kingdom over the 58-year reign of its innovative rulers, Nikola and Milena, through a guided museum visit. From examples of the first Montenegrin currency, vibrantly hued national dress and captured Ottoman flags illustrating the long struggles with its erstwhile neighbour. The museum provides a glimpse into the compelling story of the proud Montenegrin people through the 19th and 20th century.

Following our museum visit, we head to an authentic restaurant in the countryside for a tasting session of traditional Montenegrin favourites: smoked meats and cheeses with delicious priganice – incredibly moreish doughnuts served with honey, which locals traditionally offer to house guests.

We then return to Budva and have dinner together in the hotel.

DAY 5 – FREE DAY IN BUDVA

Today you have a free day to explore Budva as you wish. Why not meander along the marina or explore the narrow, cobbled lanes in the old town? Later we enjoy our final dinner at Hotel Moskva.

DAY 6 – BAR & LAKE SKADAR

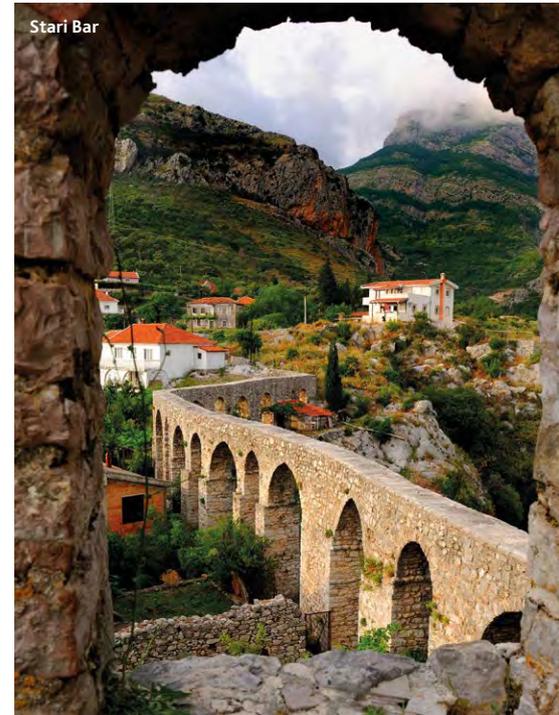
Stari Bar, or Old Bar, is a time capsule dating from 1878 when the town's old quarter was abandoned following liberation from the Ottomans. The steep but pretty street leading up to Stari Bar is filled with small shops and quaint cafés with colourful shutters and flowers. There's a wide variety of lunch options to choose from here, looking down over the new town to the Adriatic. Against the now-familiar Montenegrin backdrop of stunning mountains dotted with cypress and olive trees, peaceful Stari Bar, with its cobbled streets, is worth exploring on a short walking tour for those who wish.

The largest lake in southern Europe is our destination for the afternoon: Lake Skadar is home to half of Europe's population of endangered Dalmatian pelicans, amongst over 280 bird species which call this vast, unspoilt wetland area home. Spanning both Montenegro and neighbouring Albania, and fed by six rivers, this natural paradise is fringed by tall reeds and contains huge expanses of waterlilies that call to mind the work of Monet. To fully enjoy the lake's serene and dreamy ambience, we take a boat trip with birds flying alongside us and occasional fishermen dotting the banks. Surrounded by mountains and with just the sound of birds, it's easy to imagine you have left the 21st century far behind. In the summer months, there is the possibility to take a dip in the pristine waters of the lake, or just sit back and unwind with some complimentary local cheese, priganice doughnuts and traditional brandy.

In the evening, we enjoy a dinner together at a local restaurant overlooking Budva Bay. We'll experience a traditional Balkan 'under the bell' feast, where a hearty meal is cooked in a bell-shaped metal pot.

DAY 7 – DUBROVNIK

Today we leave Montenegro to visit its northern neighbour, Croatia. Here, we will spend the day with a local expert to see the unique city that Byron dubbed the 'Pearl of the Adriatic'. As with Budva and Kotor, Dubrovnik has a history with the Venetians although it later thrived as an independent city-state for 700 years and is markedly different to the rest of Croatia. The stunning Baroque city we see today is the result of wealth built up through trading throughout the Mediterranean and with the Ottoman Empire. Nestled behind the excellently preserved city walls are countless narrow lanes with steep stairs just waiting



to be explored. From its origins in the 7th century, the city has withstood earthquakes and war across the ages to emerge triumphant. Paved with marble, the main street gleams enticingly in the sunlight and takes you all the way through the old town, from the fortified Pile gate to the Ploče gate by the harbour.

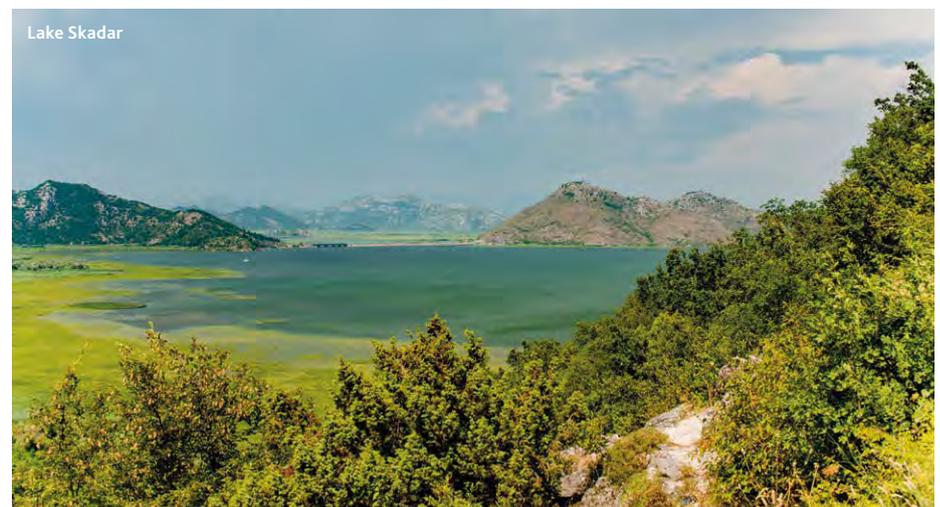
For lunch today, you may wish to dine at one of Dubrovnik's many top-quality restaurants. Why not take the opportunity to try some tasty Dalmatian-coast seafood or risotto?

The afternoon is at your leisure to explore the rest of the city. You may wish to take the cable car to the hilltop fortress above the city for spectacular panoramic views. Perhaps walk the circumference of the medieval city walls that still encompass the old town.

We then check in to our hotel for the night, the **four-star Remisens Hotel Albatros** in Cavtat, just across the bay from Dubrovnik in a wonderful location right by the sea. In the evening we visit a local restaurant for dinner, complete with a traditional folklore show involving Balkan music and singing, a great way to round off an exhilarating week of discovery.

DAY 8 – RETURN HOME

Transfer to the airport for your flight home.



ST PETERSBURG & MOSCOW

7 days from only £1,709PP
 May and July to September 2021

TWO-CENTRE TOUR



Discover St Petersburg and Moscow, home to countless symbols of imperial and revolutionary Russia, from the Kremlin and Red Square to the Hermitage and the Peterhof Palace – plus the heritage of Chekhov, Tchaikovsky and the world's finest ballet.

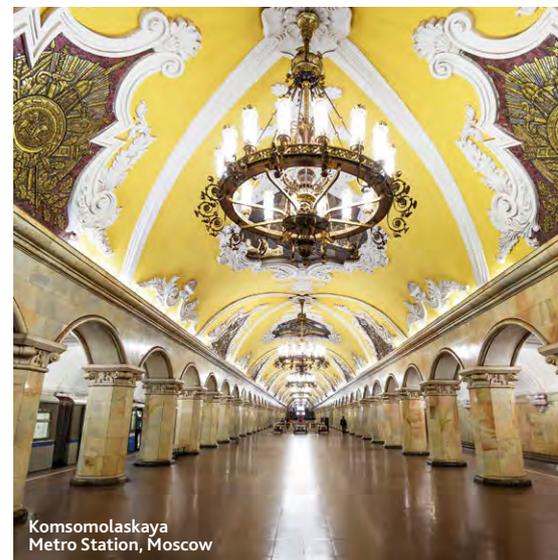
It's no wonder St Petersburg and Moscow are high on the 'must-see' list of discerning travellers. These two cities have always been pivotal to the history and culture of Eastern Europe, so it's not surprising that they're home to some of the world's most influential architecture and art.

Our first destination is St Petersburg, founded in 1703 by Peter the Great as the imperial capital of the tsars. Its majestic boulevards with splendid Baroque buildings, threaded by winding canals and set among delightful parks, evoke the style of classical Italy that originally inspired Peter's vision. The Russian Revolution changed everything – first the city lost its status as the capital of the Russian Empire under the tsars in favour of Moscow and was renamed Petrograd. After Lenin's death, its name changed again to Leningrad, then it witnessed the rise of Stalin, suffered a brutal siege lasting two and a half years during the Second World War and endured the Cold War. Vladimir Putin was born here and, in 1991, the city regained its original name. Now St Petersburg

has emerged wonderfully from its turbulent past to reclaim its place among the world's most beautiful and fascinating cities.

That elegant monument of old Russia, the Winter Palace, houses the best-known part of the Hermitage Museum, one of the world's largest collections of art and artefacts, totalling over three million pieces. Similarly resplendent are St Isaac's Cathedral with its massive red granite columns, the imposing Peter and Paul Fortress – its cathedral is the final resting place of many Romanovs – and the magisterial buildings lining the Neva River.

Its tsarist grandeur aside, St Petersburg has another face that many visitors don't appreciate. You can explore its many parks, take a stroll along its canals or window shop in its department stores and markets. It's also the location of the Kirov (now known as the Mariinsky) Theatre, where some of the most celebrated names in ballet – Nureyev, Nijinsky and Pavlova among them – gained worldwide recognition. Other famous former residents include



Komsomolaskaya Metro Station, Moscow

Visit the extraordinary Winter Palace in St Petersburg



PRICE INCLUDES

- Explore St Petersburg on a sightseeing coach tour passing the Peter and Paul Fortress, St Isaac's Cathedral and the Church of Our Saviour on Spilled Blood – and more
- Marvel at the grandeur of the Hermitage, now home to one of the world's greatest art collections
- Guided visit to Peterhof, the magnificent summer palace of the tsars, known as the 'Russian Versailles'
- Enjoy a sightseeing coach tour of Moscow's iconic sites, seeing the domes of St Basil's Cathedral, the magnificent facade of the Bolshoi Theatre and the golden towers of Novodevichy Convent
- Discover the Kremlin complex and Red Square on a fascinating guided tour
- Go underground to some of Moscow's iconic Metro stations
- Experience the wide-open spaces of Russia on the Sapsan high-speed train between St Petersburg and Moscow
- Learn about the history of vodka on a tour of the Vodka Museum in St Petersburg, plus enjoy a tasting

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Reserved seats on the Sapsan high-speed train from St Petersburg to Moscow
- Six nights in four-star superior accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

novelty in the grand arcades of Tverskaya Street and bohemian Arbat, while the list of absorbing places goes on with Gorky Park, Stalin's Bunker, the Gulag Museum, Victory Park and Tolstoy's house. Add in Moscow's celebrated Metro with its cathedral-like stations and you have an utterly unique destination.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN ST PETERSBURG

Arrive at the airport for your flight to St Petersburg. On arrival, we transfer by coach to the **four-star superior Sofitel St Petersburg**, where we stay for three nights, with breakfast. The elegant hotel is well-located around the corner from St Isaac's Cathedral and a 15-minute walk to the State Hermitage. Its Hi-So Terrace bar boasts stunning views of the city.

This evening we enjoy an informal drinks reception,

followed by dinner at a nearby restaurant, for a chance to get to know our travel companions a little better.

DAY 2 – ST PETERSBURG & THE HERMITAGE MUSEUM

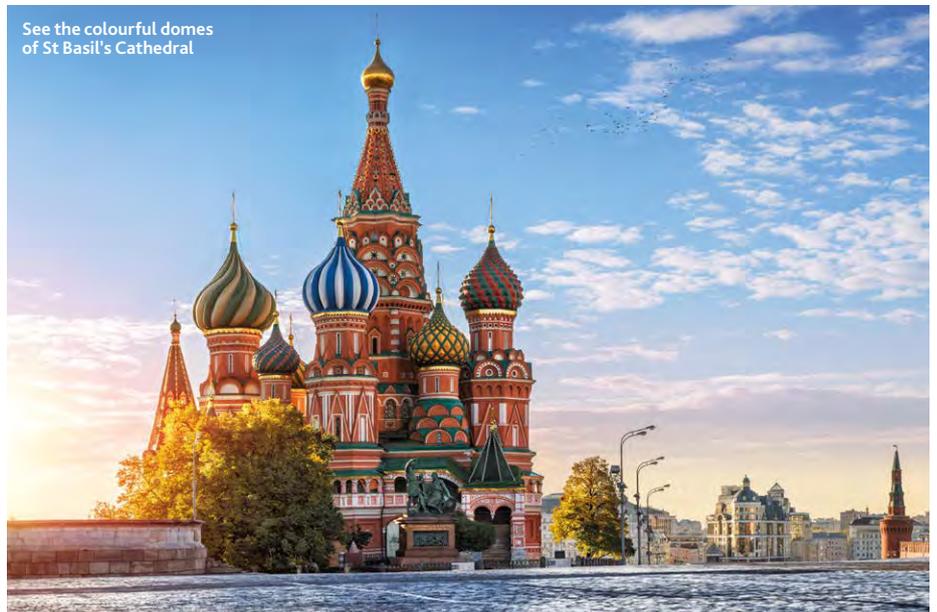
Today begins with a city sightseeing tour by coach, experiencing at first hand the unrivalled splendour of St Petersburg's imperial buildings. We see the breathtaking Winter Palace – which today houses part of the Hermitage Museum, which we will visit later. We also pass the Peter and Paul Fortress. Renowned for the glittering spire ascending from the cathedral's bell tower, the fortress sits on an island in the Neva and was once the hub of Russia's military power before later becoming a much-feared prison that counted Dostoyevsky, Trotsky and Gorky among its

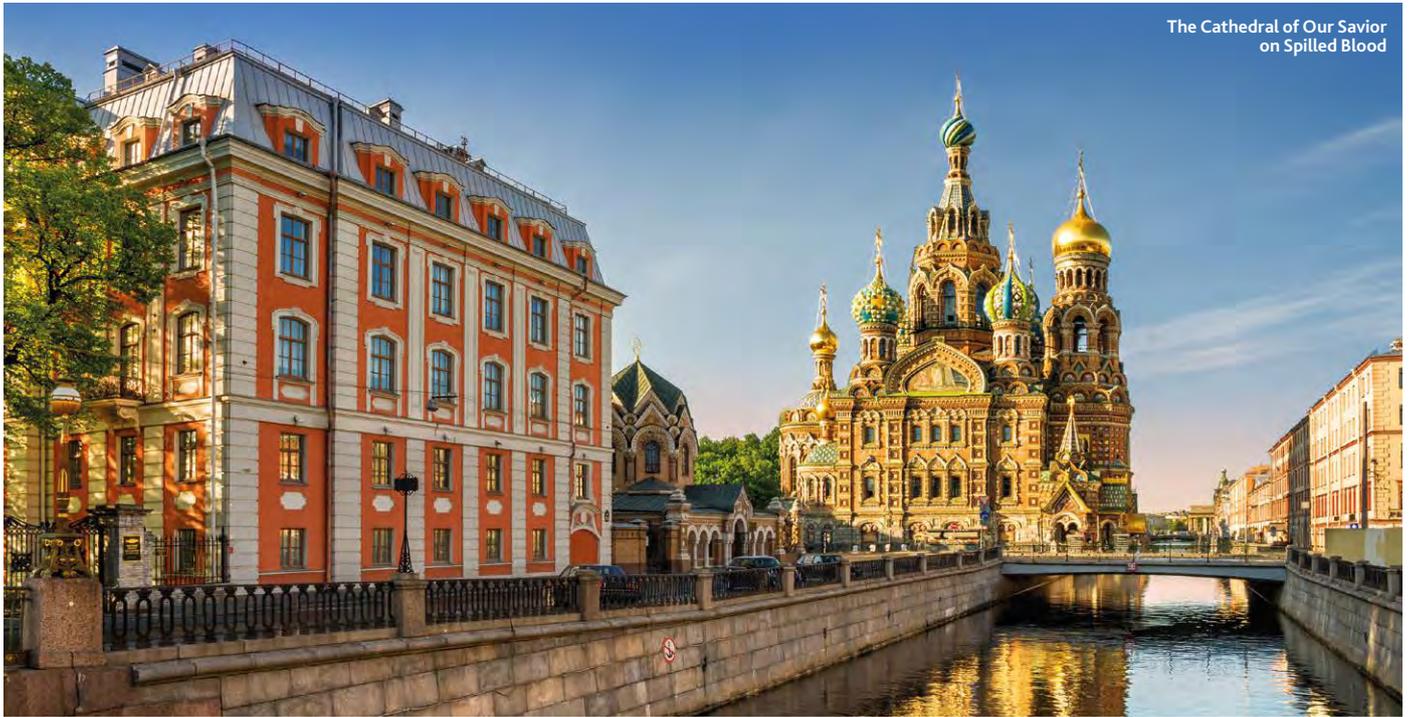
Tchaikovsky, Stravinsky and Pushkin, whose wonderful cultural legacies still endure.

Next, we visit Moscow, which is for many a city steeped in mystery. The setting of so many Cold War spy novels, the city still retains an air of intrigue, making it stand out from Europe's other capitals. Top of any visitor's itinerary is the extraordinary Kremlin complex, housing sumptuous palaces and cathedrals, the Senate, Armoury and impressive squares and towers. Equally recognisable are St Basil's Cathedral with its amazing multicoloured onion domes and Red Square, the site of Lenin's mausoleum.

Yet there's so much more to see in Moscow than these grand symbols of politics and power. The city's State University, housed in a palatial building, is where writers and thinkers such as Chekhov, Sakharov and Pasternak studied, while the Bolshoi Theatre is the home to the world's most prestigious ballet company. Art lovers are spoilt for choice with a rich array of galleries, including the world-famous Pushkin State Museum of Fine Arts. Shopping takes on a refreshing

See the colourful domes of St Basil's Cathedral





The Cathedral of Our Savior on Spilled Blood

inmates. The gleaming cathedral is the final resting place of Peter the Great, while close by is the wooden Cabin of Peter the Great, one of the city's original buildings and for a few years the summer residence of the tsars.

We see handsome religious buildings like the gargantuan St Isaac's Cathedral and the Church of Our Saviour on Spilled Blood with its ornate towers, and pass many fine houses and palaces that formerly belonged to the nobility. You'll also discover grand boulevards like Nevsky Prospekt, the pretty canals and arched bridges that give the city its sobriquet, the 'Venice of the North' and the magnificent Admiralty building. We also see the enormous Palace Square, the city's best-known open space.

This afternoon we visit the Hermitage for a guided tour of some of its highlights. The scale of this complex is overwhelming as you're surrounded by the grandeur of the former Winter Palace – enormous rooms, endless corridors, marble and gilt everywhere. The Hermitage houses an astonishing art collection, almost unmatched anywhere in the world. The statistics are staggering – its five buildings house over three million artefacts, with European paintings alone occupying 120 rooms that include masterpieces by Leonardo, Michelangelo, Rembrandt, Monet and Matisse.

Dinner is included this evening at a local restaurant.

DAY 3 – PETERHOF

After breakfast we explore Peterhof, sometimes called the 'Russian Versailles' due to its amazing residences, gardens and fountains, which were originally commissioned by Peter the Great in the 1700s. The sumptuous rooms inside the Grand Palace brim with fine art and lavish decoration – the Throne Room is especially opulent – while outside, hundreds of acres of gorgeously landscaped parkland display English and French design with bronze sculptures, summerhouses and geometrically arranged flowerbeds in complete harmony with their surroundings. Perhaps its most captivating view is the incredible Grand Cascade – 64 fountains and tiered pools adorned with golden statues that create an enchanting display. With the Grand Palace in the background, it's a truly unforgettable spectacle.

There's also time to learn about Russia's national



Peterhof

drink – vodka – with a local guide who explains how the spirit is made, its history and traditions and the many different types. This insightful experience is accompanied, of course, by a vodka tasting. Then the afternoon is free for you to explore St Petersburg. Perhaps take a boat trip along the Neva, climb the 262 steps to the colonnade of St Isaac's Cathedral for fabulous city views or simply stroll along the river, which is lined by attractive 19th-century merchants' houses as well as splendid palaces. Russia is a remarkable country and, especially for first-time visitors, one of the most thought-provoking destinations anywhere.

This evening, join your tour manager and fellow travellers for an included dinner at a local restaurant.

DAY 4 – MOSCOW

This morning we get a taste of the jaw-dropping vastness of this country when we board the German-built, high-speed Sapsan train that whisks us from St Petersburg to Moscow – roughly the distance between

London and Aberdeen – in just under four hours.

Upon our arrival in Moscow in the early afternoon, we have a guided tour of this incredible city that has played a pivotal role in world history over the past two centuries. The sense of history is staggering as we pass one remarkable sight after another and listen to the captivating stories behind them. We'll see the 16th-century Novodevichy Convent and its adjacent cemetery, the resting place for many of Russia's famous figures, including literary greats Anton Chekhov and Nikolai Gogol, politicians Boris Yeltsin and Nikita Khrushchev, and composer Sergei Prokofiev. We'll also visit the grandiose Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, the tallest Orthodox Christian church in the world – the original church to stand on this site was the scene of the world premiere of Tchaikovsky's *1812 Overture*. Moscow's myriad highlights include the world-famous Bolshoi Theatre; Lubyanka Square, dominated by the former home of the KGB; Tverskaya, the main thoroughfare; and the legendary Red Square, home to the grand GUM,



St Petersburg

Kazan Cathedral,
St Petersburg

now an upscale department store but renowned in Soviet times as the place to queue for one's paltry allocation of pots and plates. Perhaps none is more iconic than the 16th-century St Basil's Cathedral with its multicoloured domes – legend has it that the architects were blinded by Ivan the Terrible to prevent them from recreating this masterpiece.

After our tour we check in to the **four-star Novotel Moscow Centre**, where we stay for three nights, with breakfast and dinner. The modern hotel is conveniently located close to two Metro stations, so you can easily explore the city on your own.

DAY 5 – MOSCOW METRO & KREMLIN

Moscow's fantastic underground railway system, the Metro, is not only the best way of getting around the city, but many of the elegant stations are gilded works of art. This morning we visit some of the most striking stations, featuring reflective marble walls, glittering chandeliers and stunning mosaics.

Then we have a guided visit of the Kremlin complex – the apex of Russian political power. Commissioned in the 15th century by Ivan the Great, it was the world's largest medieval fortress with walls and towers built by Italian master stonemasons. We'll learn about its riveting history, as well as see its magnificent cathedrals and the splendid Terem Palace, whose 11 golden domes dominate the skyline. Gaze in awe at the astonishing Great Kremlin Palace, a 700-room royal residence that incorporates the Armoury, filled with treasures such as dazzling jewellery and the world-famous Fabergé eggs. You'll also see the imposing State Kremlin Palace, which was the USSR's base during Soviet times and is now home of the Kremlin ballet – look out for the red stars atop some of its towers.

DAY 6 – FREE DAY IN MOSCOW

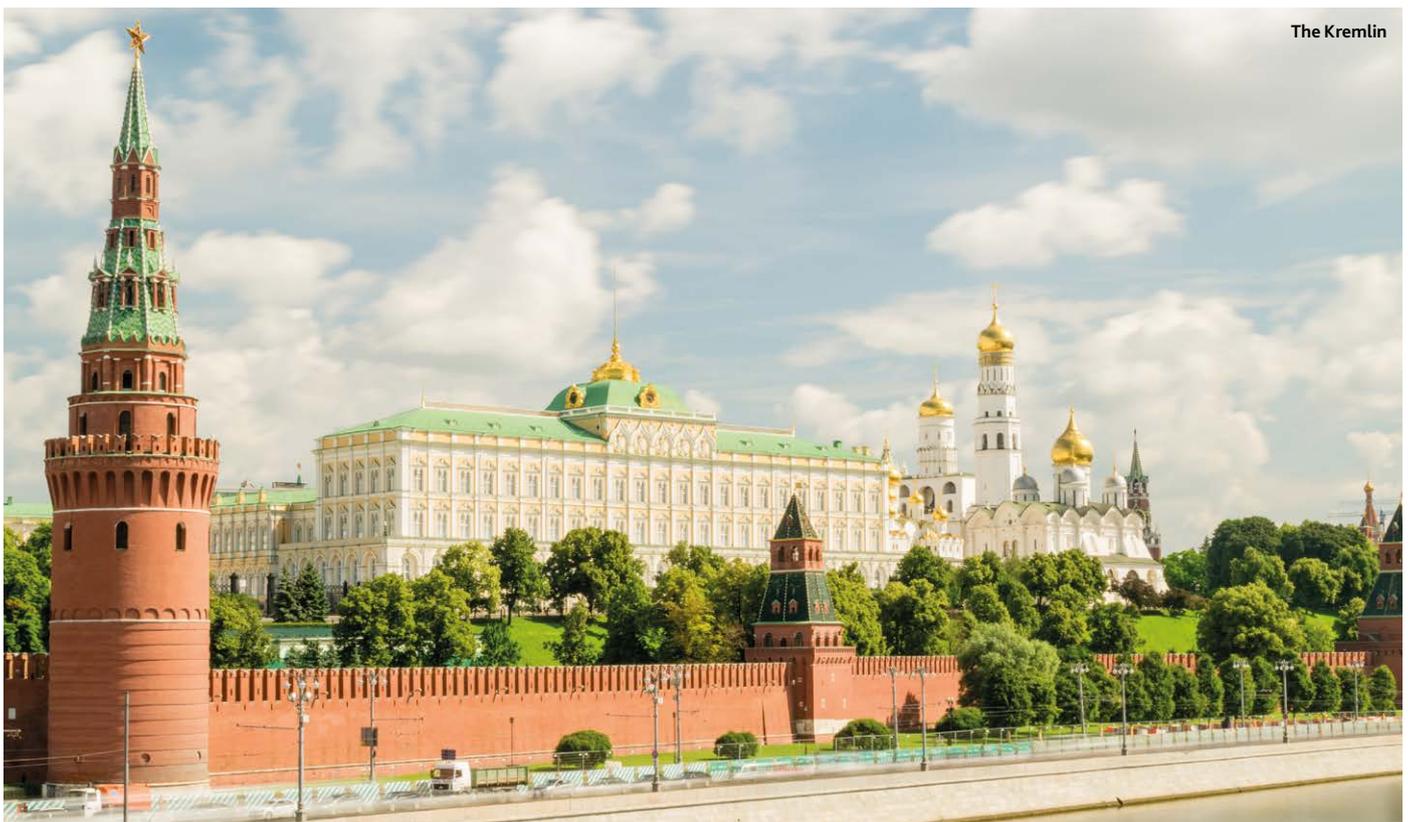
You have the entire day at leisure to relax or explore Moscow's very many gems. While the Hermitage

often tops visitors' must-see lists, the Pushkin Museum and Tretyakov Gallery each boasts world-class art collections. Don't miss the opportunity to see the Borodino Panorama at the newly reopened museum dedicated to one of the world's largest paintings, whose 380-foot canvas illustrates in dramatic detail the decisive battle of 1812 that proved to be a major turning point in history. Perhaps stroll through the famous Gorky Park, which was designed in the 1920s as a communist utopia but has now been transformed into a beautiful, eco-friendly recreational zone. For a different view of Moscow, why not take a cruise along the River Moskva?

On our final evening in this utterly fascinating city, we sit down to a farewell dinner with our travelling companions – the perfect close to a memorable tour.

DAY 7 – RETURN HOME

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.



The Kremlin

KRAKOW

4 days from only £649PP

April to August and October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Once the home of Copernicus and Pope John Paul II, Krakow rivals Prague for sheer beauty and boasts over 6,000 historic buildings, a splendid main square and the striking Wawel Royal Castle.

Set on the banks of the Vistula River near the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, beautiful Krakow ranks with Prague and Vienna as one of the architectural gems of Central Europe – in fact, its entire historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city first became prominent a thousand years ago as the royal capital of Poland and remained so for 500 years, spanning both the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Its castle, the Wawel, evolved into a sumptuous royal palace and took full advantage of its position on the ancient trade routes to the Orient and Baltic. The city's location and the trade in salt, which was extracted on a huge scale at the nearby Wieliczka mines, brought immense wealth and Krakow experienced its golden age during the 16th century, when learning and science prospered. Over the centuries, influence from Prussia and the cities of the Hanseatic League, and absorption within the Habsburg Empire, all made their marks on the marvellous architecture, art and culture of today's city.

At Krakow's heart is its magnificent medieval square, one of the largest in Europe, but there's so much more – over 6,000 historic buildings and monuments, a multitude of museums, two and a half million works of art, one of Europe's oldest universities

and a fascinating Jewish quarter. There are also about 140 churches, many of them stunningly decorated. Their presence reflects the importance of the Roman Catholic religion in Poland, and Krakow in particular. In 1978, at a time when Poland was officially an atheist country, the unknown Archbishop of Krakow was elected Pope John Paul II.



The city was spared significant damage during the Second World War, so today it's a delight to explore and offers a real glimpse into the past. Yet Krakow is far from just a collection of buildings – its atmosphere is vibrant, with the past and present beautifully intertwined. It also boasts a great cultural history, which is hardly surprising from the country of Copernicus and Chopin, and during the evening there's nothing better than enjoying one of the numerous classical concerts held in churches and concert halls throughout the city.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN KRAKOW

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Krakow. We transfer by coach to the **four-star Novotel Krakow Centrum** for three nights, with breakfast. Situated next to the banks of the Vistula and close to Wawel Royal Castle, this modern hotel has a bar, restaurant and fitness facilities, including an indoor swimming pool, while all rooms are air-conditioned and feature Wi-Fi, television, tea- and coffee-making facilities and safe. Settle in before joining your tour manager this evening for an informal welcome drinks reception, followed by a three-course dinner, where you will meet your fellow travellers and have the opportunity to get to know them.

Soak up the charms of wonderful Krakow



DAY 2 – KRAKOW

After breakfast we enjoy a guided walking tour of Krakow's historic centre. Rynek Główny, the medieval main square, is lined with grand pastel-coloured buildings dating back centuries and always busy with locals going about their business. In the centre of the square is the Cloth Hall, a splendid colonnaded Renaissance building that's been the centre of the textile trade since the 16th century. Today it's full of colourful stalls selling amber jewellery and other local crafts, and also houses an art gallery.

Overlooking the square is Saint Mary's Basilica, richly decorated with a stunning carved wooden altarpiece and a vaulted nave painted with stars. The 14th-century stained glass is particularly ornate. When the sun shines through, a kaleidoscope of colour decorates the chancel below. Listen out for a trumpeter sounding an hourly warning from the top of the taller of the basilica's two ornate spires – a reminder of the Mongol invasions of the 13th century.

You'll also see the 110-foot-high Florian Gate and the other remains of the fortifications built during the early 14th century, and the Collegium Maius, the oldest building of the Jagiellonian University, whose most famous former student was the astronomer Copernicus. Later he overturned all conventional

PRICE INCLUDES

- Explore centuries of history on a guided walking tour of Krakow's medieval centre
- Visit Wawel, the castle district, home to one of Europe's most striking royal residences
- Discover the Wieliczka salt mines, source of the city's wealth, on an optional tour
- Take a guided tour of Auschwitz and Birkenau (included but optional)

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Three nights in four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and one dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

thinking by suggesting that the sun was at the centre of the solar system, not the earth – a radical theory that sparked a scientific revolution.

We visit the Wawel Royal Castle district, built on a low hill on a bend in the Vistula inhabited since the Palaeolithic period. This fortified site was the residence of the kings of Poland from 1038 until the end of the 16th century, when Warsaw became the new centre of government. The Wawel complex includes the cathedral, royal apartments, state rooms, crown treasury and armoury. Its cathedral is the final resting place of Polish monarchs and the site of the first mass – given in 1946 – by the newly ordained priest Karol Wojtyła, later to become Pope John Paul II. In the royal apartments you'll see the impressive range of rooms that have been restored to their original Renaissance and Baroque glory, overflowing with fine furniture, works of art and one of Europe's largest – and best – collections of tapestries. There

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Traditional Polish food tour

Sample over a dozen types of traditional and authentic Polish and Krakow specialities, including Polish vodka and craft beers, with a local guide. Discover places loved by locals and explore the historic neighbourhood of Kazimierz. Your friendly guide will regale you with stories of the cultural traditions and history of the places we visit and the foods we try. We recommend a healthy appetite for this filling 3.5-hour walking tour.

From £56PP

will be free time to explore the rest of the complex, including the three-tiered Italianate Renaissance courtyard.

This afternoon there's an opportunity to tour the famous 13th-century Wieliczka Salt Mines, a spectacular subterranean attraction adorned by statues and even a chapel, all sculpted from rock salt that looks like marble; your tour manager will advise you about timings and cost. Alternatively, you may choose to join a street food tour to sample Polish specialities and explore Krakow's Kazimierz neighbourhood with a local guide. Please refer to the Personalise Your Holiday section for details.

DAY 3 – AUSCHWITZ & BIRKENAU

We thought long and hard about how appropriate it would be to include this morning's destination – Auschwitz and Birkenau – on a holiday itinerary. As a company, our philosophy is that we try to inform our clients about all aspects of the countries we visit from the 'tourist must-sees' to places of historical importance. Our guided tour to Auschwitz and Birkenau is extremely moving and thought-provoking, but it is optional and you can choose instead to stay in Krakow for the whole day.

Now a museum and monument, Auschwitz and Birkenau have been left virtually as they were when liberated in 1945. From the notorious watchtower at Birkenau you'll get some sense of the sheer scale of the atrocities that took place here. After our tour we return to Krakow in the afternoon and the mood will lift as we have time to further explore the city's wonderful attractions.

DAY 4 – RETURN HOME

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.

Main Market Square, Krakow



MALTA UNCOVERED

8 days from only £1,299PP

April to May and October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Surrounded by the azure Mediterranean and enjoying hot summers and mild winters, Malta is an idyllic year-round destination with an intriguing history. UNESCO-listed temples, Valletta's Baroque architecture, Roman catacombs and stunning vistas of Dwejra Bay on the island of Gozo all wait to be discovered.

For 6,000 years Malta has been at the crossroads of almost all the ancient Mediterranean civilisations and on mention of the island, the immediate thoughts are of the Knights of St John, the Maltese Falcon and the George Cross. With a long and turbulent past and with a language bearing influences of Latin, Arabic and Semitic dialects, it is a unique destination with so much of its past on display. Its temples are the world's oldest buildings, pre-dating the pyramids by a thousand years. Many visitors to this wonderful island never experience its undiscovered side, but on this tour we feel we have created a superb balance of interests ranging from a wonderfully varied history, unique scenery and atmospheric old towns, all in an ideal destination in which to relax. A Maltese we once met, remarked that the island is like an extended family, which may be a romantic vision, but often that's just the way it is!



DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN MALTA

Arrive at your departure airport where a Riviera Travel representative will help you check-in and help if you have any questions, and fly to Malta. On arrival a coach will take you to your hotel, the **four-star Maritim Antonine Hotel & Spa**, set in the idyllic village of Mellieha. This evening, we have an informal gathering with your tour manager and fellow travellers before enjoying a welcome dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – VALLETTA

Today you visit the wonderful 16th century city of Valletta where you enjoy a guided walking tour. Built by the Knights of St John after a huge siege by the Ottoman Turks, it was Europe's first planned city since Roman times. Valletta, one of the world's strongest fortresses, is located on a magnificent natural harbour and has changed little since it

Mdina

PRICE INCLUDES

- Guided tour of historic Valletta, city of the Knights of Malta and a baroque masterpiece, including a visit to the Malta Experience
- Tour of the unspoilt island of Gozo
- Visit to Mdina, the atmospheric former capital city during ancient times
- Guided tour of Rabat plus a visit to St. Paul's Catacombs, burial place of early Christians
- Visit to the Neolithic temples of Ggantija and Hagar Qim, said to be amongst the world's oldest free-standing structures, pre-dating the pyramids
- Visit to the picturesque fishing port of Marsaxlokk

Plus, of course...

- Escorted by our experienced tour manager
- Return travel from a selection of regional airports and transfers to and from your hotel included
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation including all taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage

DAY 3 – GOZO

Today we head to the sleepy island of Gozo nearby and visit its capital, Victoria, known to locals as Rabat. This charming medieval town has twisting streets and alleyways with superbly preserved battlements. Rising above the surrounding countryside is the imposing Citadel, visible from

most of the island. The pace of life in Rabat is very relaxed – what could be better than sipping a coffee while watching the world go by?

A drive to the coast takes us to Dwejra Bay, where dramatic coastal formations surround an inland sea and sheer cliffs plunge into deep blue waters. It's not difficult to imagine the magnificent



was built. St. John's cathedral is remarkable, with overwhelming decoration and colour, an intricate marble floor, a wonderful ceiling covered in gold leaf and fine paintings with the high point being Caravaggio's masterpiece 'The Beheading of John the Baptist'.

You will visit the Malta Experience which tells the story of this wonderful island using the latest audio-visual techniques. In the afternoon you may want to visit the archaeological museum, the Grand Master's Palace or the National War Museum at Fort St Elmo which houses the replica of the George Cross. Valletta has a typical Mediterranean atmosphere and appearance, with quiet squares lined with restaurants and intricate wrought iron balconies adorning the tall honey-coloured houses bedecked with geraniums and given life by the constant chatter of the Maltese greeting each other in the street.



Gozo



The Blue Grotto

Azure Window that once stood here – the limestone arch sadly succumbed to a heavy storm in early 2017.

DAY 4 – FREE DAY

Today you have a free day for you to explore as you wish. A wander around St Julian's perhaps, with its picturesque quayside lined by excellent fish restaurants. One thing in Malta we really recommend but cannot organise for you is a visit

to the Hypogeum, a series of underground burial chambers and temple dating from 3,500BC. Visits need to be reserved well in advance and are very limited.

DAY 5 – RABAT & MDINA

This morning, we take a short drive to Rabat and walk through the beautiful medieval streets to St Paul's Catacombs, the earliest archaeological evidence of Christianity in Malta.

The site comprises a maze of early-Christian burial chambers dating from the 4th century, complete with over a thousand tombs.

We then visit the Wignacourt Museum, a must for anyone interested in art or history. Formerly the baroque residence of the Chaplains of the Knights of Malta, the museum has a superb collection of art and sculptures. From here, you can travel through an underground passage to St Paul's Grotto, where the apostle was believed to have stayed after he was shipwrecked in Malta. Nearby are the Roman catacombs, a labyrinth of 3rd-century AD subterranean tombs. Beneath these lie the impressive World War II shelters, which provided a safe haven for refugees and the people of Rabat during air raids.

Next we head to nearby Mdina, the jewel in the crown of the entire island, perched on a hill surrounded by huge walls. There's time for lunch before we visit the Church of Mosta, with the third largest dome in the world, amazingly decorated, but principally famous as the unfortunate recipient of a direct hit by a bomb during Mass. Fortunately it failed to explode, establishing the legend of a miracle.

DAY 6 – FREE MORNING & VINEYARD VISIT

The morning is free to do as you wish. Malta's seafood is exceptional, so maybe a spot of shopping followed by a leisurely lunch of the 'catch of the day' at a restaurant overlooking the sea? The wines of Malta may not be as widely acclaimed as those produced by its Mediterranean neighbours,



Valletta

but the country has actually been producing quality vintages since the time of the Phoenicians over two thousand years ago. Now, the growing wine industry is gradually gaining the recognition it so deserves, and to explore this lesser-known facet of Malta, this afternoon we visit a prestigious wine estate near Mdina, the ancient capital. After a tour of their vineyards, we'll enjoy a tasting of three of their superb wines.

DAY 7 – THE BLUE GROTTO & HAGAR QIM

This morning we drive to the southern coast to see the mesmerising waters of the Blue Grotto. The combination of the sunlight and location creates a wonderful display: the caves mirror the phosphorescent colours of the sea and underwater flora. We continue to the prehistoric, megalithic temples of Hagar Qim, a UNESCO-listed site on a hilltop overlooking the sea. One of the chambers has an elliptical hole, hewn out to align with the sunrise of the summer solstice, so the rays pass through and illuminate a stone slab within the chamber!

We stop for lunch at the pretty, waterside village of Marsaxlokk. For centuries, fishermen have landed their catches and repaired nets on its picturesque quayside, which remains little changed over the years. It's an ideal spot to relax in today, as it's lined with cafés and restaurants. Later we visit Vittoriosa and have a short walking tour of the old fortified city, named to commemorate the Great Siege victory of 1565.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.



St Paul's Catacombs



Marsaxlokk

MARRAKESH & THE ATLAS MOUNTAINS

6 days from only £829PP

January to February, May and October 2021

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Immerse yourself in a truly captivating city filled with intriguing souks, vibrant squares and superb architecture, plus experience stunning natural wonders.

A visit to Morocco is like taking a journey back in time – it's everything you imagine it to be and so much more. It is a country of startling contrasts due to the legacies left behind by its past rulers and inhabitants: starting with the earliest records from Phoenician times, then coming under the sway of Carthage, followed by the Romans and from the 7th century the Ottomans, and finally, the French. This has created a unique and utterly compelling country which today, although relatively close geographically, remains delightfully exotic, mysterious and unspoilt.

Marrakesh is Morocco's most vibrant city, full of myths and mystery. Today it's an anachronism, one of the most exciting and captivating places you will ever visit, with one foot in the present and one firmly in the past. It was once an oasis on the ancient caravan routes to the south, soon becoming a natural centre of commerce and consequently, during medieval times, Morocco's capital. Vast wealth poured in from nearby Moorish Spain and skilled artisans built the city you see today.

Surrounded by almost intact medieval ramparts, ochre-coloured Morocco boasts some amazing buildings. Dominating the traditional low-rise skyline is the astounding minaret of the Koutoubia Mosque, towering at more than 60 metres high, visible for miles around and a classic example of Moorish architecture. Then there are the Saadian Tombs, the intricately decorated final resting place of the descendants of Mohammed, plus the spectacular Royal Palace and a host of other wonderful things to experience.

The city's maze of tiny streets is interspersed with tranquil gardens watered for centuries by an ingenious underground water system that still functions after all these years. At the heart of it all though is the immense Jemaa el-Fnaa, Africa's busiest square and the site of one of the world's greatest spectacles, especially atmospheric at dusk. Here, bustling street restaurants serve all kinds of delicacies with mouth-watering aromas filling the air, set in what can only be described as a medieval circus. Storytellers recount tales of old, while courageous fire-eaters and skilled acrobats entertain the eager crowds. Scribes pen letters while barbers are busy at work. Underscoring the whole scene is the heavy drumbeat of musical troupes playing their instruments, the sights and sounds of which are enchanting. The balmy warmth of the Moroccan evening adds to the atmosphere, and all this under an ocean of stars makes for a fabulous experience.

The Moroccans themselves display legendary hospitality: culturally bound to offer help to visitors, they are extremely friendly, generous and open. One of the great delights when exploring Morocco is its exciting cuisine, and Marrakesh is a veritable food-lovers' paradise. Whilst our tour is on a half-board basis, to get an authentic taste of the local cuisine, you may choose lunch in the hotel, instead of dinner, to try the city's myriad of atmospheric restaurants and sample the local delicacies. Most famous is the pastilla, a legendary pastry prepared with pigeon or chicken flavoured

with cinnamon and honey. Indeed, renowned TV chef Robert Carrier once stated that there are three outstanding cuisines in the world: French, Chinese and Moroccan. Join us on this exhilarating tour of one of the world's most fascinating cities and experience all its wonders for yourself.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN MARRAKESH

Arrive at the airport, where you'll be met by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team, and fly to Marrakesh. On arrival we transfer by coach to the excellent **four-star superior Hotel Opera Plaza** where we stay for five nights. Set in



Essaouira

Explore the famous market square of Jemaa el-Fnaa



its own private grounds, this hotel is ideally located, allowing easy access to the sights of the old city. All the rooms are comfortable, air-conditioned and well-appointed in a contemporary design. There are three restaurants and dinner is included in the main restaurant which serves international cuisine; you may wish to upgrade to either the Asian or Moroccan 'à la carte' restaurants. After a day of wonderful sightseeing, you can relax in the chic lounge bar or the cosy café bar. There is also a large outdoor pool shaded by palm and olive trees, (open during the summer months, weather permitting) and a spa. Settle in before your tour manager's reception of traditional Moroccan mint tea, then get to know your travelling companions over a welcome dinner.

DAY 2 – MARRAKESH & THE SAADIAN TOMBS

Marrakesh is a labyrinth of tiny alleyways teeming with activity like few other places in the world. With classic, French colonial buildings and boulevards surrounded by remarkably preserved medieval walls, the city is so perfect it could be, and often is used as, a film set.

This morning, we enjoy a sightseeing tour during which we will see the Saadian tombs, one of the world's finest examples of Moorish architecture, where classic archways are covered in gold leaf and stucco work. Plus, we will experience the Bahia Palace, which when built was acclaimed as the world's most beautiful palace, famed for its 50 marble columns.

We also visit the famous souks or covered

PRICE INCLUDES

- Discover Marrakesh and explore its countless gems including the medieval medina, atmospheric souks and the extraordinary Jemaa el-Fnaa square
- Explore Marrakesh on a guided tour, seeing its remarkably preserved medieval walls and the stunning Jardin Majorelle, once home to Yves St Laurent
- Experience the spectacular Atlas Mountains, Africa's greatest mountain range and an ever-present backdrop to Marrakesh
- Visit the Saadian Tombs, one of the finest examples of Moorish architecture
- Visit Essaouira, a 15th-century coastal town and one of North Africa's most attractive ports

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a selection of regional airports
- All hotel transfers, plus portorage of one item of luggage
- Five nights in four-star superior accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, with breakfast and dinner
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

markets, where immensely skilled craftsmen create intricate leatherware, jewellery and furniture. At dusk, after dinner in the hotel, we visit the Jemaa el-Fnaa square, a showcase for traditional Moroccan life. You will experience a fantastic spectacle of musicians, dancers, fortune-tellers and snake charmers in an exhilarating kaleidoscope of colour.

DAY 3 – MARRAKESH

This morning, we continue our tour of marvellous Marrakesh. The city boasts a wealth of wonderful gardens, some vast with olive groves and lakes, providing a haven of peace and tranquillity away from the hustle and bustle of the city. One of the prettiest parks is the Jardin Majorelle: an amazing display of bamboo, bougainvillea and cacti, formerly owned by Yves Saint-Laurent. Surrounding the city are impressive ramparts stretching 19 miles long, still largely intact with imposing forts at various intervals. The gates are fine examples of classic Moorish architecture with their pastel hues changing colours depending on the time of day and the intensity of the light.

The afternoon is yours at leisure to further your exploration of Marrakesh at an unhurried pace, or relax in your hotel and take advantage of its excellent facilities.

DAY 4 – ESSAOUIRA

Our day begins with a comfortable drive to the delightful coastal town of Essaouira, which came to prominence during the 15th century when the Portuguese established the medieval citadel that still stands today. Within its walls are a maze of tranquil squares and perfectly preserved streets, lined by whitewashed houses and pavement cafes. It's a sheer pleasure to stroll through the markets here, where the stalls groan under the weight of colourful fresh fruit and vegetables. Or simply wander along the harbour, bustling with a hive of activity and where fishermen repair their nets as they have done for centuries.

Essaouira is so charmingly unspoilt it has been featured as the location for several blockbuster productions, from Orson Welles' *Othello* to Ridley Scott's *Kingdom of Heaven*. During your journey, the real Morocco unfolds and the landscape changes from fertile green plains to a moon-like semi-desert, occasionally studded with palm trees. Mud-brick villages blend perfectly into the background, while shepherds of all ages tend their herds of sheep and goat – the transport of choice here is very much the donkey.

DAY 5 – ATLAS MOUNTAINS & MARRAKESH

Forming an ever-present backdrop and adding to Marrakesh's wondrous setting are the soaring, snow-capped Atlas Mountains. This morning, we take a drive into the stunning foothills with the countryside evolving from saffron-coloured fields to steeper, wooded slopes, slashed by dramatic, river-filled gorges. Mammoth peaks soaring more than 3,000 metres high spear the vivid, blue sky while the desolate mountainside stretches before us. Then the forests commence, rolled out like a massive green carpet and beyond, misty plains stretch to the horizon in a patchwork of muted colours. There's time to take in the spectacular vistas when we stop to stretch our legs and perhaps enjoy a cup of coffee or tea.

After a morning of sightseeing, we return to Marrakesh in the early afternoon. The rest of the day is at leisure, giving you ample time to make the most of your final day in this wonderful city.

DAY 6 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for your return flight.

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Enjoy a Moroccan gastronomic experience

Attend La Maison Arabe's world-renowned cooking workshop, where a professional chef will teach you how to create a delicious and authentic Moroccan dish. Then you'll feast on your culinary creations with your fellow cooks. From £36pp.



SOUTH AFRICA

16 days from only £2,999PP

January to March and August to November 2021

MULTI-CENTRE TOUR



A 'world in one country' is no exaggeration - incredible game viewing, a vast patchwork of different cultures, scenery and history coupled with superb food and wine make for a world-class destination.

South Africans call their homeland 'a world in one country'. It covers an area equivalent to five times the size of Britain, with a climate ranging from temperate, Mediterranean and sub-tropical to desert; it offers spectacular scenery with arguably the finest wildlife on earth and no less than eleven official languages. South Africa is truly a world-class destination!

Firstly, a more naturally beautiful country would be difficult to find - from the serrated peaks of the Drakensberg mountains, to the contorted and timeless semi-desert landscapes of the Karoo and the forested sea-shores and mirror-like lakes of the Garden Route, the enchanting temperate valleys of the Winelands, the rare proximity to nature found in the national parks and the instantly recognizable symbol of the country, Table Mountain - all under an endless azure-blue sky. Quite remarkable!

Then there is the wildlife, one of the main reasons visitors travel to Africa. One of the finest places in the world to experience this is the Kruger National Park, which is a similar size to Wales. It is exactly how you imagine the African bush to be, as depicted

on countless TV documentaries: areas of sweeping savannah, bisected by rivers full of hippos, muddy waterholes lined with animals quenching their thirst, and the bush itself, home to zebra and antelope, studded by immense biscuit-coloured termite hills and towering above it all, instantly recognisable giraffes! The park is home to an incredible 150 mammals and 500 bird species including the 'big five': elephant, lion, rhino, leopard and buffalo. Game-viewing is an intensely moving experience with nothing preparing you for the waves of emotion inspired by an encounter with these wonderful, almost regal creatures thriving in their natural habitat. Just to highlight the variety of flora too, the Cape Peninsula alone has twice as many plant varieties as Britain, which is 5,000 times bigger. But South Africa is not just about scenery and wildlife, fabulous as it is.

The cities are amazing and highlight the country's diversity. Brash Johannesburg, city of gold and South Africa's cultural capital, with skyscrapers of concrete and glass separated by canyon-like streets contrasting with townships on its outskirts.



Gaze at magnificent Table Mountain in Cape Town



Then there is the 'Mother City', Cape Town, overlooked by the vast bulk of Table Mountain and easily Africa's most beautiful and sophisticated city. It is a real multi-cultural melting pot, with stunning Cape architecture, superb beaches, the best cuisine in the country, fabulous street musicians, mime artists and entertainers adding to its cosmopolitan atmosphere.

Any country is shaped by its past - South Africa more than most with its recent history a constant struggle between the British, Afrikaners, and various indigenous peoples, the Zulus being the most well-known. The British annexed the Cape from the Dutch during the 18th century, who then set out inland founding the Orange Free State and the Transvaal. However, with the discovery of the world's largest gold deposits, British interest flourished! This culminated in the Boer War and unification of the country. We all inevitably associate South Africa with the inhumanities of the old Apartheid system, which needs no explanation.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Tour the legendary Zulu War battlefields of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift with a specialist guide
- Full-day guided safari in the Kruger National Park, one of the world's most outstanding game reserves
- Stay in the heart of the gorgeous Western Cape's Winelands, enjoying a cellar tour and tasting at a 300-year-old wine estate
- Stay three nights in cosmopolitan Cape Town, one of the world's most naturally beautiful cities, dominated by the instantly recognisable Table Mountain
- Explore legendary Cape of Good Hope and Cape Town's Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens
- Visit Johannesburg's Apartheid Museum, a real must in understanding contemporary South Africa
- Gaze at the awe-inspiring Blyde River canyon, the third largest in the world
- Follow the enchanted Garden Route, one of South Africa's greatest drives
- Visit Hermanus for the world's finest on-shore whale watching, dependent on season
- Enjoy a scenic drive through the beautiful small country of Swaziland
- Take an internal flight to the stunning Garden Route

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from the UK
- All hotel transfers, plus portage of one item of luggage
- Stay in hand-picked four-star and three-star hotels with daily breakfast, two lunches and three dinners
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

Our visit to the Apartheid Museum in Johannesburg takes us on a fascinating, horrifying, humbling and ultimately inspiring journey from the dark days of 'whites only' privilege, through to Nelson Mandela's historic release. Documentary film, texts, sound clips and live accounts recapture life in the old South Africa.

We also visit the famous battlefields of the Zulu Wars, Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift - one a crushing British defeat sending shock waves throughout the Empire, the other a valiant stand of just 140 against 4,000 Zulus. Few tours visit these remarkable sites, a vital and deeply moving part of South Africa's unique heritage.

The Garden Route in the Western Cape is legendary. With a mild climate and facing the southern Indian Ocean, this unique region encompasses beautiful coastal and mountain scenery. Depending on the time of year, we'll have the opportunity to travel to the beautiful seaside resort of Hermanus, the best place for on-shore whale watching. We also spend a most enjoyable few days surrounded by the seemingly never-ending rows of vines in fertile valleys, backed by the lofty mountains of the enchanting Winelands.

This wonderful 16-day tour is designed to highlight South Africa's truly amazing diversity of cultures, its curious blend of old and new, and its phenomenal scenery and wildlife. You leave with the feeling that the new South Africa, open to the world after years of isolation, is a land of superlatives which cannot fail to impress the welcome visitor!

DAY 1 - DEPARTURE

You will be met at the airport before you take your overnight direct flight to Johannesburg.

DAY 2 - ARRIVAL IN JOHANNESBURG

After our morning arrival, we transfer to the **four-star Indaba Hotel** in a prosperous suburb, north of the

city. On the way to our hotel we take the opportunity to visit the Apartheid Museum, a truly fascinating exhibition charting the apartheid years and the struggle against it, culminating in the first democratic elections. It is a superbly presented walk through contemporary history using original material, riveting eyewitness accounts, photographs and film. The rest of the afternoon is at leisure. Tonight there will be a drinks reception, where you can meet your travelling companions in an informal setting before your welcome dinner.

DAY 3 - PANORAMA ROUTE

After breakfast we depart for the open spaces and farmlands of the Highveld, following the Panorama Route to Kruger National Park, one of the most scenic drives in South Africa. We follow the spectacular rim of the Blyde River Canyon, an amazing 20-mile long and 2,300-foot deep gorge cutting a vast swathe through the Great Escarpment separating the temperate grasslands of the highveld and the drier savannah beyond. Deep circular rock formations created by years of erosion and many excellent vantage points offer superb photo opportunities for some of the most breathtaking views in Africa. Our hotel for the next three nights is the **four-star Sanbonani Resort**, beautifully located in the heart of the Bushveld. Chalets overlook the rivers, where hippos and crocodiles can be seen on the riverbanks. The resort has a restaurant, bar and swimming pool. Dinner is included tonight.

DAY 4 - KRUGER GAME DRIVE

Today we have a full day's game drive in specially adapted 10 seat 4x4 vehicles. There is simply nothing to beat that rising feeling of anticipation and excitement as we enter the nearby park in the half-light of the spectacular African dawn, surrounded by the noise of a unique 'dawn chorus'. Which animal



Isandlwana

shall we spot first? Perhaps an elephant, a family of warthogs or possibly even the elusive cheetah. The experienced game rangers know the best tracks and waterholes whilst their stories will amuse, inform and fascinate you. Most have lived here all their lives, accumulating a vast wealth of knowledge. One minute they can be talking about the constituents of elephant dung and the next about the mating behaviour of hippos or the latest UK football scores!

DAY 5 - KRUGER FREE DAY

This is a day at leisure for anyone who just wants to take it easy by one of the pools at the hotel or do some hippo-spotting from the lovely lawn overlooking the river. Alternatively, you could try some elephant encounters, exciting microlight flights or even river rafting (all subject to weather conditions), as well as sunset safaris or night safaris where you can experience the unique thrill of an open 4x4 vehicle game drive by spotlight.

DAY 6 - SWAZILAND & KWAZULU NATAL

Today we leave Kruger on our way to the battlefields of Zululand. After breakfast we'll drive south, entering the small but scenically beautiful country of Swaziland. As the road climbs past the interestingly named Piggs Peak we descend through lush green fields and rolling hills interspersed with small farms and drive through the country's small capital

Mbabane, passing the parliament house and Royal Palace en route.

We cross back into South Africa in the afternoon and enter Kwazulu Natal province, staying at the simple **three-star Battlefields Lodge** for two nights with breakfast.

DAY 7 - ISANDLWANA & RORKE'S DRIFT

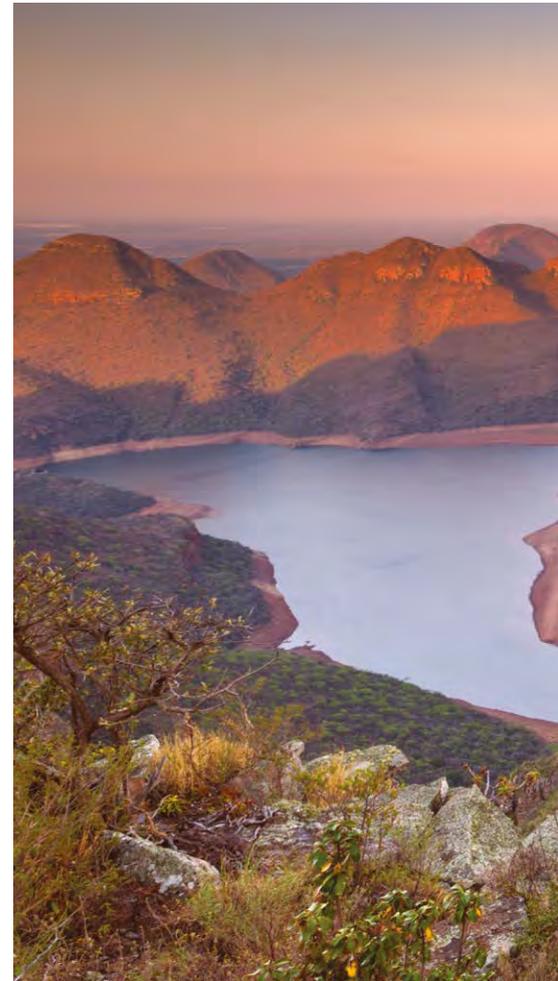
After breakfast we visit the battlefields of Isandlwana and Rorke's Drift. Brilliantly dramatised in the films Zulu Dawn and Zulu, these two battles, just a day apart, became a defining moment for the British Empire. In 1879 at Isandlwana, a depleted force of 1,300 were surprised and outmanoeuvred by a 20,000-strong Zulu army armed with cowhide shields and spears. Only a handful survived. The next day just 9 miles away, about 140 British soldiers, some wounded, held off 4,000 Zulus for over ten hours at Rorke's Drift, an action earning eleven Victoria Crosses, the largest number ever awarded in a single engagement. Isandlwana particularly, remains a haunting and lonely place, with mass graves marked by simple white stones. Our specialist Zulu guide will really make those desperate encounters come alive. We return to our hotel in the afternoon. Lunch is included today.

DAY 8 - MOSSEL BAY

After breakfast we return to Johannesburg airport, flying to George in the Western Cape and at the heart of the gorgeous Garden Route. We take the short drive to the coastal town of Mossel Bay and our hotel, the charming **three-star superior Diaz Hotel & Resort** with breakfast. The comfortable rooms all boast excellent sea views. Dinner at a local restaurant is included this evening.

DAY 9 - CANGO CAVES & OUDTSHOORN

Today we head inland, through stunning mountain scenery of the Ruitersbos Nature Reserve to the foot of the Swartberg Mountains. Here we'll visit the spectacular Cango Caves, formed over millions of years in the soft limestone and South Africa's best-known caves. Next we head to the small town of Oudtshoorn, a centre of ostrich farming since the 19th century. We'll have the opportunity to see these fascinating



creatures close up and learn about their habits. After an included lunch, we head back to Mossel Bay.

DAY 10 - HERMANUS

This morning, we take the long scenic drive to the Cape's beautiful Winelands before continuing to Hermanus, a lovely town that's also the world's best spot for on-shore whale watching, usually between



Winelands



July and November. These gentle giants move in seemingly permanent slow motion and are a truly amazing sight as they playfully cavort in the water. You arrive in the Winelands by late afternoon, staying two nights on bed-and-breakfast at the excellent **four-star Devon Valley Hotel**, which is a real find. This little property is set on the valley slopes offering breathtaking views, lush gardens, a relaxing shady terrace, a comfortable bar with dark leather armchairs, fireplace and a wide selection of single malt whiskeys.

DAY 11 - WINELANDS

Today we tour the awesomely beautiful Winelands. Set in a valley backed by majestic mountains, rows of manicured vines and orchards stretch into a distance studded by lime-washed, often thatched, 300 year-old wineries built in the unique Cape Dutch style, seemingly mirroring the undulations of the surrounding countryside. Our first stop is elegant Stellenbosch, established 300 years ago and home of South Africa's most prestigious university. Period buildings and historic streets reinforce the town's dignified atmosphere. We have time to explore this delightful town before enjoying a fascinating cellar tour and tasting at the award-winning Neethlingshof Wine Estate. After that, we visit the small town of Franschoek, set at the head of a valley. Tonight we'll enjoy an included typical South African BBQ or Cape Malay buffet dinner at our hotel.

DAY 12 - CAPE TOWN

This morning we visit the amazing Kirstenbosch Botanical Gardens, located just outside Cape Town and set against the eastern slopes of Table Mountain. These incredible gardens are some of the best in South Africa, with numerous fascinating endemic flora and orchid varieties. We soon arrive in Cape Town and our

hotel, the **four-star Southern Sun Waterfront Hotel**, staying three nights on bed and breakfast. It is located right in the centre of this bustling city within walking distance of the V&A waterfront. The afternoon is spent at leisure when you can start to explore this beautiful city.

DAY 13 - CAPE OF GOOD HOPE

This morning, we visit Cape Point and the legendary Cape of Good Hope, firstly driving past pristine beaches to the picturesque fishing harbour of Hout Bay. We continue along the breathtakingly scenic Chapman's Peak Drive, full of rugged seascapes, to the Cape of Good Hope Nature Reserve, one of the world's biodiversity hotspots, then on to Cape Point itself. We see the confluence of the Indian and Atlantic Ocean currents and the treacherous promontory of rocks and swells, the scourge of mariners for centuries. Finally we visit Boulders Beach and its penguin colony, returning to the city during the afternoon.

DAY 14 - FREE DAY IN CAPE TOWN

Cape Town, featuring British, Dutch and Cape Malay influences, is simply one of the world's most naturally beautiful cities with so much to offer the visitor! You could do some bargain shopping at the Waterfront, followed by a sumptuous seafood lunch. Or maybe go people-watching at fashionable Camps Bay? Obviously no visit to Cape Town is complete without taking a revolving cable car ride to the top of iconic Table Mountain which has announced the city to generations of sea-farers. The views are fabulous. You should also visit Robben Island (weather permitting and based on availability), where Nelson Mandela spent most of his 27-year incarceration, and whose visitors since its opening have included

Bill Clinton, Margaret Thatcher, Bill Gates and even Nelson Mandela himself. Perhaps though, simply wander where your feet take you, or relax a little, taking afternoon tea in beautiful colonial splendour at the Mount Nelson hotel – the choice is yours.

DAY 15 - RETURN FLIGHT

Our final day in Cape Town is at leisure before a transfer to the airport, at the appropriate time, for our return flight via Johannesburg to the UK.

DAY 16 - ARRIVE HOME

We arrive back in the UK after a truly unique tour.



INDIA & SHIMLA

15 days from only £2,629PP

February to April and September to November 2021

MULTI-CENTRE TOUR



The 'Taj' at dawn, a tiger in the wild and the Himalayas are amazing sights, all infused with an extraordinary and eclectic mix of colours, sounds, customs and religions.

India, a unique country and civilisation, is a mind-boggling potpourri of sights, sounds, colours and experiences as well as a culture-shock of astonishing contrasts. Immerse yourself in this tour and prepare for a revamp of any preconceptions towards one of the world's 'must-see' destinations!

The jewel of our tour is surely the Taj Mahal in the early morning, when its colours and ethereal beauty is at its most amazing. Built to house the tomb of Mumtaz Mahal, Emperor Jahan's wife, it took 20,000 men 22 years to finish it. The end result transcends the extraordinary world monument it is. The tomb represents the ultimate expression of a pure and enduring love, a tangible expression of the unquantifiable. But there's more. We'll see the real India, a subcontinent that covers the full gamut of evolution, from the natural world, including the nation's unofficial symbol, the tiger, in Ranthambore, through the Rajasthan forts and palaces of the Moghul Empire, to the more recent Raj and British colonial influence.

We'll stay for three nights in Rajasthan, regarded as India's most colourful state, a region fringed by deserts, populated by a fiercely proud, warrior race and a plethora of forts and palaces. No area in all of India more clearly illustrates the paradox of ancient and modern which exist side by side.

We stay in Rajasthan's capital city of Jaipur, known as the 'Pink City' due to the colour of its walls and so many of its buildings, and we visit the Maharajah's City Palace as well as the great Amber Fort, one of the masterpieces of Rajput architecture, guarding the northern approaches to the city.

We delve, ever deeper, into the culture and history of Rajasthan with our stay at the Alsisar Mahal, a restored fort, converted into one of the region's best heritage hotels. A wonderfully sumptuous setting where Belgian crystal chandeliers hang above exquisite marble floors, cut from the very quarries that supplied the builders of the Taj Mahal.

On selected departures our tour continues on to the hill-station of Shimla, effectively the summer capital of India during the Raj. At over 7,300ft, the



Experience the beautiful
Taj Mahal



cooler climate made this the ideal location to escape from the searing summer temperatures on the plains below. Dominated by the baronial splendour of the Viceregal Lodge, Shimla was, in those days, a microcosm of late Victorian English society. Surrounded by vast forests of teak and pine and located across a long ridge with steep mountainous terrain on all sides, Shimla was not the easiest place to get to. But Victorian engineers managed to build one of the marvels of Indian Railways, the 96-kilometre narrow-gauge line to Shimla, which is now a UNESCO World Heritage site. Our journey 'clickety-clicks' along those very tracks laid by those intrepid imperial engineers more than a century ago.

But India is not all history and architecture – genuine Indian cuisine is far more varied and interesting than what we are used to at home. From a simple hot chapatti fresh from the oven, to the delicate spices of Kheer, a sweet rice pudding, a trip to India will change your view of Indian cookery – and don't worry, many of the curries are quite mild! However, for the brave at heart, there's the gasket-

PRICE INCLUDES

- Visit all the major sights of Old and New Delhi
- See the breathtaking Taj Mahal bathed in soft morning light, gazing in awe at the simple purity of its white marble and the exquisite craftsmanship of its inlay work
- Enjoy a guided tour of the 400-year-old deserted Moghul city of Fatehpur Sikri
- Driving safari in Ranthambore National Park, the best place in India to spot the elusive tigers
- Spend two nights in the 'Pink City' of Jaipur, capital of the desert kingdom of Rajasthan with a guided city tour, seeing the City Palace, Astronomical Observatory and the Palace of the Winds
- Marvel at the extraordinary location and beauty of Amber Fort, home of one of India's most powerful maharajas
- Stay in an original Rajasthani fort, converted into a stunning Heritage Hotel
- Travel on the famous Shimla railway

Plus, of course...

- Return direct scheduled flights with premium economy flight upgrades available at a supplement
- All hotel transfers, plus portage of one item of luggage
- Stay in hand-picked three-star to five-star accommodation, with breakfast and seven meals, plus a sumptuous buffet when staying at the Oberoi Cecil in Shimla
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

blowing prospect of Phaal curry. Whichever culinary delight you choose, the one guarantee is that the Indian people are supremely hospitable and will go out of their way to ensure their visitors enjoy their stay.

From the flawless grandeur of the Taj Mahal, to the mighty fortresses of Rajasthan and from the reminders of past glories of the Raj in Delhi to the teeming markets of Jaipur, our India tour encompasses the very best of northern India, ensuring a lifetime of truly amazing memories.

DAY 1 - DEPARTURE

You will be met at the airport check-in before your overnight direct flight to Delhi.

DAY 2 - ARRIVAL IN DELHI

On arrival, we transfer to the **five-star Taj Palace** for one night. All rooms are stylishly furnished and air-conditioned with flat-screen TVs, personal safe, mini-bar and complimentary tea/coffee. After a short

rest we commence our guided tour of New Delhi. The city centre, designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens in 1911, is bisected by wide, tree-lined avenues, a hub which clearly reflects the Raj legacy and home to the former Viceroy's Palace, now the Presidential Palace. Heading down the imposing Rajpath, we pass India Gate and the Parliament building. We'll visit some of Delhi's older monuments, including the Qutub Minaret, started in 1199, which is the tallest stone built tower in India. Nearby is Humayun's tomb, an outstanding example of Moghul architecture and the first mausoleum of its type, pre-dating the more widely known Taj Mahal by nearly a century. Tonight we enjoy your tour manager's drinks reception followed by a welcome dinner with the group.

DAY 3 - OLD DELHI

This morning we continue our city tour, first visiting Old Delhi, starting with the Raj Ghat, a fittingly simple memorial to Mahatma Gandhi. We continue past



the imposing walls and battlements of the great Red Fort before visiting the Jama Masjid, one of Asia's largest mosques. We leave Delhi in the afternoon for our drive to Agra, arriving at our **four-star Oberoi Trident hotel**, in the late afternoon. A buffet dinner at your hotel is included tonight.

DAY 4 - TAJ MAHAL

We rise early to catch the sun rising over the Taj Mahal. In the soft morning light, as the mist rises from the Yamuna River behind it, the Taj Mahal seems to float, mirage-like, above the surrounding landscape. A combination of extraordinary beauty, symmetry and history makes this wonder of the world one of the most amazing monuments on the planet and you will have plenty of time to admire it from all angles. Moving on, we continue our tour with a visit to the vast red sandstone Agra Fort. Completed in 1573, it was the headquarters of the Moghul Empire, boasting vast size and opulence, its buildings make it more of a walled palace than a fort. In the evening you have the option of completing a wonderful day with another visit to the Taj Mahal, to witness the shrine at sunset.

DAY 5 - FATEHPUR SIKRI

Leaving Agra this morning we continue towards the ancient abandoned city of Fatehpur Sikri, built in 1571, as Emperor Akbar's imperial capital. Although it was mysteriously abandoned just 15 years later, it remains in a remarkable state of preservation, with numerous palaces, wide courtyards and beautiful carvings. Just 15 kilometres away is the Bagh Bharatpur, a luxury Heritage Hotel in Bharatpur where we stop for lunch before going on to the railway station to catch the Shatabdi Express for our comfortable two and a half hour journey to Ranthambore National Park. Originally the private hunting preserve of Maharajahs, its 400 square kilometres of forested rolling hills, valleys and lakes form a unique ecosystem. Started in 1973, India's famous Tiger Project was created to protect the country's tiger population. Despite many difficulties, the tigers of Ranthambore have survived and numbers have stabilised. Our hotel for the next two nights is the comfortable family-run, **three-star Ranthambore Regency** on full board basis.

DAY 6 - RANTHAMBORE TIGER SAFARI

An early start this morning is worth the sacrifice as we head out to the park for our safari using specially-built, 20-person, open-top four wheel drive vehicles known as 'canters'. After many years of conservation,



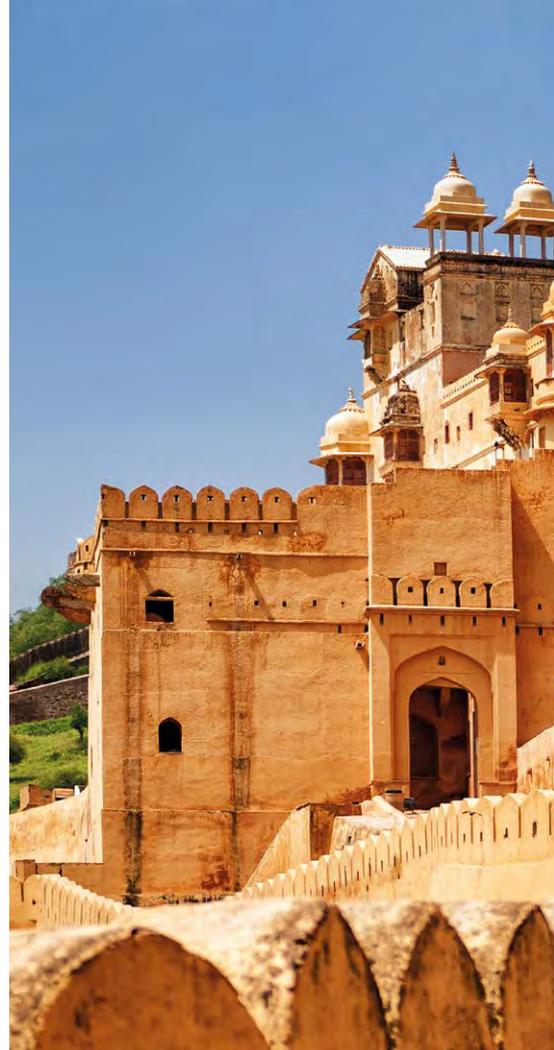
Ranthambore is now the best place to spot tigers in India, but the reserve is about more than tigers – over 300 bird species have been counted including impressive crested eagles, painted stork and wild peacocks. The park's residents also include large numbers of sambars, the largest Asian antelope, as well as marsh crocodiles, wild boar and rare sloth bears and leopards. Look out for the playful troop of black-faced langur monkeys near the main entrance gate.

We return to our hotel in the late morning, with time to relax before and after lunch. In the afternoon we take our second trip into the park for another chance to spot the elusive tigers.

DAY 7 - JAIPUR

Leaving Ranthambore after breakfast we head north to the 'Pink City' of Jaipur. Our afternoon tour will cover all the major highlights of this ancient city. The famous Hawa Mahal, known as the Palace of

Amber Fort



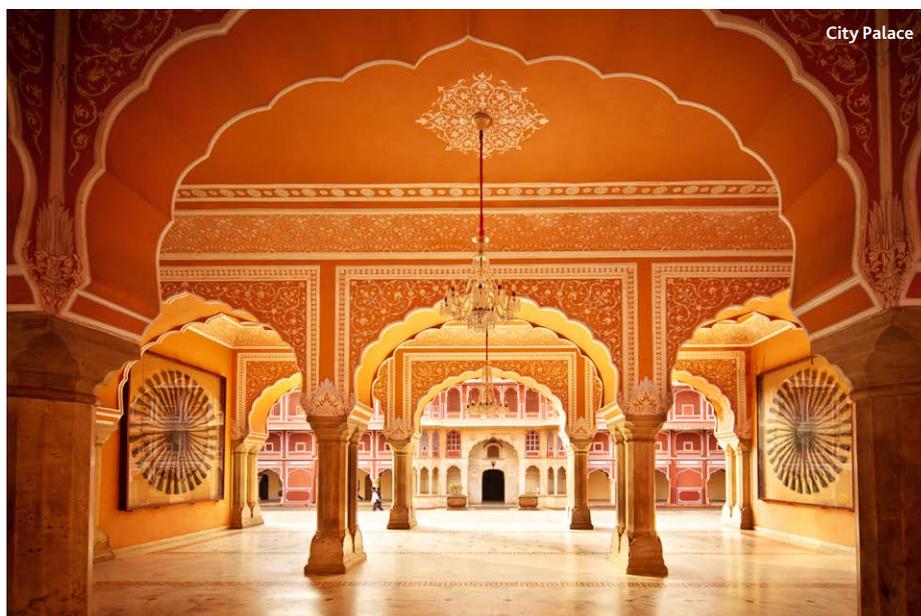
Winds, is one of our first stops before we continue to the Astronomical Observatory constructed in 1726 and on to the City Palace, still home to the present Maharajah of Jaipur, where we'll view collections of costumes, carpets, paintings and the impressive armoury. Our hotel for the next two nights is the new **four-star Hilton Jaipur**.

DAY 8 - AMBER FORT

This morning another highlight, on a tour of highlights: you'll visit the immense Amber Fort, located in the hills just a short drive out of Jaipur. Sampling all the most fascinating sights, our guided tour includes the sections reserved for the Maharajah's wives and concubines as well as the remarkable hall of mirrors, with tiny delicate convex mirrors embedded like a mosaic in the walls and ceilings.

DAY 9 - RAJASTHAN

After breakfast, we bid goodbye to Jaipur and head north, deeper into the interior of rural Rajasthan. We pass numerous small villages and towns on our way to the Sekhawati region of the state and the village of Alsisar. This was once part of India's Silk Road and over the years the merchants here grew very rich, building a large number of luxurious mansions known as 'havelis', to display their wealth through the magnificence of their frescoed walls. Although most of these have now been abandoned, the imposing and luxurious residence of the local kings has been lovingly restored into an amazing Heritage Hotel, the **Alsisar Mahal**, where we stay for the night with a buffet dinner. A maze of winding corridors, cool courtyards



City Palace



and arched colonnades, lead to the charming rooms, all different, but most are spacious and some with four-poster double beds. Rooms are air-conditioned, with bath or shower, but no TV. In the afternoon we take a guided walk through the village to explore the best examples of the havelis that lie just outside the walls of the **Alsisar Mahal**.

DAY 10 - DELHI

After breakfast we head back to Delhi staying at the **Taj Palace**.

DAY 11 - TRAIN TO SHIMLA

We take the morning express train from Delhi for our four-hour journey north to Kalka. Our train reservations are in 'chair-class' carriages, with comfortable seating, air-conditioning and large windows. At Kalka we change trains onto the Shimla narrow-gauge 'toy' train for the last part of our journey. Although the carriages are smaller and not air-conditioned, the compensation is the increasingly spectacular scenery en-route. Inaugurated by Viceroy Lord Curzon back in 1903, this amazing railway encounters no less than 800 bridges and 102 tunnels on its 96-kilometre journey to Shimla. A packed lunch is included today.

We arrive in Shimla's small station in the late afternoon from where we are transferred straight to the town's haven of luxury, the **five-star Oberoi Cecil Hotel**, where we stay for three nights, bed and breakfast. With its Burmese teak floors, magnificent atrium lobby, its excellent restaurant, indoor pool and Asian Spa, this is one of India's best-known hotels. All the spacious rooms are air-conditioned, beautifully furnished and have views of the surrounding teak forests.

DAY 12 - SHIMLA

Today we explore the many reminders of British colonial life in Shimla. The most fascinating by far is the immense Viceregal Lodge and its beautiful botanical gardens, built in Scottish baronial style to house the Viceroy and his staff for the six months they were based in the town. Although some of the interior of the building is closed to the public, the areas that are open give an incredible glimpse into the not-so-distant past. Particularly touching is the large collection of photographs from the late Victorian era and the last years of the Raj.

We also take a walk along the pedestrian-only Mall, from Scandal Point and Christ Church past the Mock-Tudor Post Office, the Gaiety Theatre and the Town Hall. There are a huge number of shops and markets and Shimla is particularly known for the quality of its locally made pashmina shawls.

DAY 13 - FREE DAY IN SHIMLA

Enjoy a day at leisure in Shimla, relax at the hotel pool or spa, or maybe take another stroll along the mall and do some last minute bargain hunting in the markets. Alternatively, there are a number of short local 'treks' that can be arranged in the surrounding hills. A sumptuous buffet dinner is included at the Oberoi Cecil tonight.

DAY 14 - TRAIN TO DELHI

Today we say goodbye to Shimla and the Oberoi Hotel as we start our return journey to Delhi. This time we descend by car to Kalka from where we catch the train back to Delhi for our last night at the **Taj Palace**.

DAY 15 - RETURN FLIGHT

We depart Delhi in the early afternoon on our flight home to the UK, arriving back the same day.

Palace of the Winds



VIETNAM & CAMBODIA

16 days from only £3,079PP

January to April and September to November 2021

MULTI-CENTRE TOUR



Visit the major sights of Vietnam and Cambodia, the very essence of Indochina, experiencing their captivating blend of French colonial history, unique local culture and beautiful rural scenery.

The overwhelming image retained by visitors to Vietnam is that of a country blessed with an extraordinary beauty. It's a mosaic of mist-shrouded mountains, vibrant green forests, a patch-work of rice paddies and pristine white beaches, whilst its villages and cities are custodians of the culture and monuments of a unique 2,000-year-old civilisation. A journey through some of the delightful countryside is like stepping back in time: farmers bent double underneath their traditional conical hats work in fields stretching into the distance, whilst docile water buffalo methodically plough the rice paddies. On the roads there are bicycles being ridden to market, overloaded with everything from huge sacks of rice to an imponderable number of ducks! Lining the riverbanks are wooden houses, balancing precariously on stilts and thatched with palm leaves.

Vietnam has a long and chequered past: for 2,000 years it was ruled by the Chinese, the Khmers, Mongols, Portuguese and the Japanese. They all left their legacies in the temples and Pagodas, together with palaces, fortresses and innumerable other buildings in every style imaginable. It was then colonised by the French,

whose contribution was cathedrals, fine mansions, neo-classical public buildings, not forgetting excellent baguettes and pastries – an eclectic mix! Many visitors also inevitably recall the US-Vietnam war – who could forget those dramatic images of the frantic helicopter flights from the roof of the US embassy?

In the past few years Vietnam has opened its doors to the world and much has changed. Today, in one of the world's last communist countries, the motorcycles and western dress of the industrious youth happily co-exist with orange-clad Buddhist monks and political posters from a different era. Visitors are invariably impressed by the development of excellent hotels and services in all the major centres and the much-improved road network.

Hanoi and Saigon still retain a French flavour in their pavement cafés, architecture and wide tree-lined boulevards. In Hue, the former imperial capital, we see the amazing Citadel and its imperial Forbidden City, modelled on Beijing. Contorted by years of erosion, we'll also explore the staggeringly beautiful rock formations of Halong Bay, a UNESCO World Heritage site.





See the astonishing temples of Angkor

But Vietnam is more than just history and scenery. It also boasts a world-class gastronomic heritage: a delicious fusion of Malay, Chinese and Thai cuisines. With plenty of French-run restaurants thrown in for good measure, all at excellent prices, you really are in for a treat! The Vietnamese themselves are a wonderfully friendly people, always smiling, courteous and proud to show off their beautiful country to all.

Our tour in Cambodia includes a stay in the capital, Phnom Penh. Beautifully located at the confluence of the Mekong and Tonle Sap rivers, Phnom Penh, with its vibrant riverside ambience, is one of the 'hidden gems' of Asian cities. After being virtually completely depopulated during Pol Pot's regime, the city is now full of life and thriving once more. A short flight away is the town of Siem Reap, the gateway to the incredible complex of temples within the ancient city of Angkor. At its height in the thirteenth century, Angkor had a staggering one million inhabitants, larger in area than Manhattan. It was the capital of the fabulously wealthy Khmer Empire that stretched from Thailand, through Laos and Cambodia to southern Vietnam. The incredible state of preservation, the

PRICE INCLUDES

- Stay in Hanoi, Vietnam's beautiful capital, and enjoy a tour by cycle rickshaw, seeing the Temple of Literature, tree-lined avenues, colonial belle-époque villas and Ho Chi Minh's thought-provoking mausoleum
- Take a leisurely cruise aboard a converted Chinese junk in UNESCO-listed Halong Bay
- Be inspired by the hauntingly beautiful countryside with shimmering rice fields, where buffaloes are tended by farmers adorned with conical hats
- Stay in Hue, Vietnam's last royal capital, and visit its awe-inspiring Citadel and Forbidden City
- Stay in the heart of exciting Saigon, visiting the fascinating Cu Chi tunnels, the former Vietcong underground stronghold and a poignant reminder of the US-Vietnam conflict
- Enjoy a full-day trip on the mighty Mekong delta, the world's 10th-largest river system
- Stay in Siem Reap, the gateway to the Angkor city ruins
- Stay and tour in Phnom Penh, Pearl of Asia, considered the most beautiful of Indochina's French colonial cities
- Visit the Angkor ruins, a UNESCO-listed complex of ancient temples and one of the world's greatest ancient sites

Plus, of course...

- Return direct scheduled flights with premium economy flight upgrades available at a supplement
- All hotel transfers, plus portage of one item of luggage
- Stay in hand-picked five-star and four-star accommodation with daily breakfast and six meals
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY: MAKE IT YOUR OWN

Phare, the Cambodian circus

Phare shows feature young performing artists who will enthral you with uniquely Cambodian stories from folklore, history and modern society, conveyed through modern circus acts, dance, live music and theatre. Profits go to PPSA, a local non-profit association working to improve the lives of children, young adults and their families with art schools, education and social support. From £22pp.

beauty of its design and artistry of its sculptures have, for many, made Angkor one of the great wonders of the world.

Vietnam and Cambodia are countries in flux, but bicycles and mopeds still outnumber cars by 100 to 1, so now is the time to visit these most fascinating and colourful destinations, whilst so much of their unique character and traditions are still in evidence!

DAY 1 - DEPARTURE

You should arrive at Heathrow airport where you will be met by a member of the Riviera Travel team before you take your overnight direct flight to Hanoi on Vietnam Airlines.

DAY 2 - ARRIVAL IN HANOI

After our morning arrival, we transfer to the **five-star Melia Hotel**, for three nights on bed and breakfast. This is a fabulous hotel with three restaurants, lovely pool, fitness centre and all the facilities you would expect from a major international property. Unwind after your flight with a refreshing drink at the hotel's lounge to mingle with your fellow travellers. We then

Thien Mu Pagoda, Hue



have a wonderful introduction to Hanoi on our trip into the city's old town by cycle rickshaws with time for some lunch before returning to our hotel. This evening we have a welcome dinner enjoying typical Vietnamese cuisine at a local restaurant, the perfect opportunity to get to know your fellow travellers and tour manager.

DAY 3 - HANOI

Today we explore Hanoi, past and present. The French created this gorgeous colonial city of tree lined avenues, belle epoque villas, grand public buildings and an Opera house, all built around more than a dozen enchanting lakes. This graceful scene blends beautifully with its old quarter, a tangle of narrow streets, the commercial heart of the city for hundreds of years and now full of tiny shops, pagodas and the ever-present populace astride their bicycles and mopeds.

During our guided tour we also see the beautiful Temple of Literature dedicated to Confucius and Vietnam's first university, and the imposing marble mausoleum of Ho Chi Minh himself, embalmed and eerily on display. This afternoon is free for you to explore this beautiful city as you wish. You could even visit a traditional water puppet show - a real spectacle where, as the name suggests, with the aid of fireworks and music, folk stories are played out by skilful puppeteers.

DAY 4 - HALONG BAY CRUISE

Today we visit Vietnam's greatest natural wonder, the UNESCO World Heritage site of Halong Bay. Leaving Hanoi, we enter a timeless landscape of rice paddies, following the Red River delta to the emerald seas of the Gulf of Tonkin. Just offshore, some 3,000 limestone islands and outcrops rise almost vertically from the sea, forming one of the most extraordinary and spectacular bays in the world.

As we board our converted Chinese junk and glide along the jade-green waters it's not hard to imagine how the myths of their creation began: a dragon is said to have plunged into the sea and its thrashing tail sculpted the craggy islands. We visit some of the vast and beautifully illuminated caves and grottoes before having lunch on board. We return to Hanoi late afternoon.

DAY 5 - HUE

Today we fly south to Danang and then drive over the stunning scenery of the Hai Van Pass before descending to Hue, Vietnam's last royal capital and its traditional centre of religion, culture and education. It's one of the country's most beautiful small towns, bisected by the serene Perfume River and dominated by its immense Citadel. This houses the ancient capital, encircled by an amazing 6 miles of high, 65 foot-thick walls and a moat.

Tonight we stay for two nights on a bed and breakfast basis at the excellent **five-star Imperial Hotel Hue**.

DAY 6 - HUE IMPERIAL CITY

This morning we start with a leisurely river cruise to the magnificent seven-storied Thien Mu pagoda, a working Buddhist shrine, affording beautiful views towards the mountains on the border with Laos. We then visit the incredible complex of the Citadel and within it, the Imperial City. We see the Palace of Supreme Harmony, which contained the emperor's throne and was the site of the most important official ceremonies and functions. Everything is painted in the royal colours of red and gold and the whole building is a stunning example of the magnificent lifestyle enjoyed by the Vietnamese royal family.



Hue



In the afternoon we visit Emperor Tu Duc's mausoleum. More interested in poetry than running the country, Tu Duc's lifestyle suggests he had plenty of free time - he had 104 wives, 50-course meals and tea made from the dewdrops of lotus blossoms! It took 3,000 workers three years to build his amazing mausoleum, which includes a large lake, pavilions and a theatre. Lunch is included today and the evening is at leisure.

DAY 7 - SAIGON

Today we fly to Ho Chi Minh City, or Saigon as the locals still insist on calling it. Brash and boisterous, it has real zest for life. Built virtually from scratch by the French, on a bend of the wide Saigon River,

we stay three nights on bed and breakfast at the excellent, **five-star Equatorial Hotel**. Saigon is Vietnam's culinary capital offering a very wide variety of excellent dining experiences, from top class restaurants in swish luxury hotels to French, Italian, Chinese, Japanese and Indian options, plus everything in between.

DAY 8 - CU CHI TUNNELS

This will be a day to remember! We visit the famous Cu Chi tunnels, a complex underground network stretching for 200 kilometres, which included hospitals, meeting rooms, sleeping quarters and kitchens. Begun during the last years of French rule and vastly expanded during the 1960's, the tunnels

Cruise UNESCO-listed
Halong Bay

provided a base for the Vietcong from which to attack US forces within just 30 miles of Saigon. Our visit here is a fascinating insight into these times: we see the tunnels themselves and examples of the many mantraps and stake pits which protected them. Despite being carpet-bombed, the tunnels were never really penetrated and should you wish, you may even try out real period weapons on a firing range. We continue through rural farming communities back to Saigon. In the afternoon our city tour covers all the major sights including the colonial-style central post office, the cathedral and the Reunification Palace where famously in 1975, a tank burst through its gates in the final defining moment of the Vietnam War. We also see the War Remnants Museum and the lively Ben Thanh market, a fascinating insight into Saigon daily life - you can find anything here, all at extremely good prices!

Cu Chi tunnels



Ta Prohm Temple

DAY 9 - MEKONG RIVER DELTA

Today we drive out of Saigon towards the great Mekong River delta. The first stop is at one of the many islands where we walk through a typical village and try out several different types of tropical fruit that are grown in the area. Travelling in small boats we continue our exploration through the narrow canals by visiting the aptly named Coconut Island, where locals specialise in producing rice paper, coconut cakes and other local delicacies. Dappled sunlight filters through the wide leaves of the mangroves as we arrive at a typical local restaurant for lunch of local Mekong specialities, including the famous and delicious deep-fried elephant ear fish! We return to Saigon in the afternoon.

DAY 10 - FLY TO PHNOM PENH

This morning we take our short flight from Vietnam to Phnom Penh and our hotel, the centrally located **four-star Palace Gate** for two nights on a bed and breakfast basis.

DAY 11 - PHNOM PENH

Today we'll visit the majestic Royal Palace with its silver pagoda and the fascinating National Museum. After lunch in a local restaurant, we visit the Tuol Sleng Museum – originally a school, turned into the country's most notorious prison by the Khmer Rouge, it now charts the terrible suffering during their occupation of the city. Finally there's time for a stop at one of the local markets before we return to our hotel for the evening.

DAY 12 - FLY TO SIEM REAP

We leave for the airport and our short flight to Siem Reap, staying three nights at the **four-star superior Borei Angkor Resort & Spa**, which has a large pool and spa.

DAY 13 - ANGKOR

Today we see the haunting soft morning light rise over the eerie temples of Angkor. Surrounded by jungle, shrouded in mist with a tropical dawn chorus

PERSONALISE YOUR HOLIDAY

Day 15 - Pre Book: Late Check Out with afternoon tea at the Tropicana bar. From £47pp

reverberating in the air, this is something you will never forget! We visit the huge fortified 13th century city of Angkor Thom, with its five monumental gates, and 300-foot wide moat - its centre containing one of Angkor's most remarkable sites, the temple of Bayon. Crowned by over fifty towers, each with four enormous carved heads looking out in every direction, this is an awe-inspiring masterpiece of Khmer art. We'll also visit the smaller temple of Ta Prohm which has been left in its natural, unrestored state, with giant tropical trees bursting through the ruins, their roots clinging like vast tentacles across the walls and roofs. After lunch at a local restaurant and late in the afternoon we see the massive temple of Angkor Wat, one of the largest religious structures in the world. The main entrance faces due west to catch the rose-red glow of the setting sun a truly magical time of day.

DAY 14 - FREE DAY IN SIEM REAP

Today we have left free for you to return to the many monuments of Angkor, explore Siem Reap or relax around the attractive pool at the hotel. Alternatively, you could take an interesting tour to the nearby lake of Tonle Sap to visit a floating village, subject to water levels.

DAY 15 - RETURN FLIGHT

At the appropriate time you will be taken to the airport for your return flight via Saigon (change of aircraft) connecting to our homeward direct flight to Heathrow.

DAY 16 - ARRIVE BACK HOME

We arrive back in the UK in the morning after a truly unforgettable tour.

NEW ZEALAND

LAND OF THE LONG WHITE CLOUD

22 days from only £5,879PP

January and May 2021

MULTI-CENTRE TOUR

Its mountains and rivers, fjords and glaciers are breathtaking. Experience magnificent National Parks, charming towns and pristine landscapes plus wonder at its volcanic geysers and boiling mud pools.

A bit of a cliché, yes, but it's true: New Zealand is one of those holiday destinations of a lifetime – its mountains, rivers, fjords, and scenery are quite literally breath-taking! And with a population of only a few million in a land approximately the same size as the UK, you'll quickly become attuned to the easy-going Kiwi lifestyle as you travel through the country's magnificent national parks, charming towns and pristine landscapes.

Getting to New Zealand can be a long and tiring journey, so we have chosen to include a stopover in Singapore and fly with Singapore Airlines, renowned for their world-class service and with direct flights to Auckland and from Christchurch. We have two days here to explore the many attractions this thrilling Asian metropolis has to offer, including its dazzling architecture, superb cuisine and vibrant mix of cultures.

We stay in Auckland for two nights to give you the best opportunity to acclimatise to the time zone. We then travel to the sub-tropical Bay of Islands for two nights - a wonderful region of small historic towns and a deeply indented coastline filled with golden sandy coves, a paradise for sailing and boating.

New Zealand is primarily a farming country, full of dairy herds and of course millions of sheep – so what better way to experience this way of life than to stay a night with a New Zealand family in the fertile region of Cambridge, south of Auckland. Our group will be

split between a number of local homesteads, where you'll be able to gain a first-hand understanding the very basis of the country's economy whilst getting to know your friendly hosts.

Rotorua is one of the North Island's greatest areas of geothermal activity, with its spectacular geysers, steaming hot pools and bubbling mud. It's also a centre of Maori settlement and in the evening you attend a Maori Hangi (feast) featuring a Powhiri (formal welcome) and traditional songs and dances relating the stories of Maori myths and legends, followed by a meal of lamb, chicken and kumara (sweet potato) cooked in the traditional way, in an underground oven.



We continue to the east coast and the renowned wine-producing region of Hawke's Bay, facing the Pacific Ocean. Here we stay in charming Napier, famous for its unique architecture, a legacy of a 1931 earthquake when the whole town was rebuilt in just two years in the Art Deco style of the time.

Wellington, New Zealand's diminutive capital, offers a bustling waterfront and from Mt Victoria, there are outstanding views of the city's beautiful harbour. Te Papa, the fascinating National Museum, covers every aspect of New Zealand's history, art, culture and geography. Crossing the Cook Strait between the North and South Islands by InterIslander ferry we cruise through the Marlborough Sounds with their beautiful turquoise-blue waters on our way to Nelson, known as the South Island's sunniest spot and next to the beautiful coastal scenery of the Abel Tasman National Park. Her you'll enjoy a wonderful cruise with the chance to walk a section of the Abel Tasman Coast Track.

New Zealand has gained a reputation as an outstanding wine-growing nation, and Marlborough on the northeastern corner of the South Island is certainly one of the key regions for producing premium quality wines. We'll stop at one of the numerous wineries for a tasting.

Christchurch is the country's second largest city and following the devastating earthquake of February 2011, a major reconstruction programme is underway

Explore the beautiful
Bay of Islands



in the city centre. Fortunately, access to the wonderful Botanic Gardens, Hagley Park and the Canterbury museum has not been affected and already city architects are winning awards for some very innovative projects, including the new 'temporary' cardboard cathedral.

The TranzAlpine train crossing of the Southern Alps from Christchurch to Arthur's Pass must rate as one of the world's great railway journeys and you'll love the stunning views from the panoramic windows. Our tour then follows the west coast of the South Island to the magnificent Franz Josef glacier. The best way to experience this amazing natural phenomenon is from the air, so we have arranged for an included helicopter flight, with an alpine landing, to see the magnificent Franz Josef glacier – a breathtaking highlight of your tour!

Queenstown, situated on the shores of Lake Wakatipu, is often described as the 'Adventure Capital of the World', or 'the Scenic Gem of the South Island'. Whichever description is most apt, you can be sure you'll not be disappointed by your stay in one of the country's outstanding resorts, always busy with visitors enjoying its many restaurants, shops and activities on offer. We have a full day at leisure here, so you can choose to relax or be as active as you wish.

The small lakeside township of Te Anau is the gateway to the World Heritage Fjordland National Park, and what a park it is! The grandeur and majestic

PRICE INCLUDES

- Experience the sub-tropical climate of the stunning Bay of Islands, including a dolphin-watching cruise
- Cross the Southern Alps on the TranzAlpine train, one of the world's great train journeys
- Visit Christchurch, New Zealand's second city
- Visit Te Puia, Rotorua's geothermal wonderland
- Cruise awe-inspiring Milford Sound
- Explore Auckland, the 'City of Sails'
- Admire Napier's beautiful art deco architecture on a guided walking tour
- Visit the 'Sunshine City' of Nelson and cruise along Abel Tasman National Park's stunningly scenic coastline
- Vineyard visit and tasting in Marlborough, one of the world's finest wine regions
- Enjoy an included helicopter flight around the iconic Franz Josef glacier, with an amazing alpine landing
- Stay two nights in Queenstown and enjoy the resort's scenic location
- Get close-up views of snow-capped Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest peak
- Discover cosmopolitan Singapore during a two-day stopover

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights – premium economy upgrades available at a supplement
- All hotel transfers, plus portage of one item of luggage
- Stay in hand-picked four-star and three-star accommodation
- All breakfasts, one dinner, a traditional Maori Hangi feast in Rotorua, and a private wine tasting in Marlborough
- A welcome drinks reception to meet your fellow travellers
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

beauty of this untouched landscape almost defies description, from glacier-carved valleys, through thousands of hectares of virgin forest, to glimmering lakes, waterfalls, and Alpine peaks, these are world-class sights to savour. Our cruise, on one of the world's great fjords, Milford Sound, is the highlight of our visit before heading northwards to Mount Cook, New Zealand's highest mountain and a fitting conclusion to your holiday in Aotearoa, the Land of the Long White Cloud.

Of course, New Zealand is not just about its extraordinary landscapes – the cuisine and wines are just as good a reason to go: you won't find better lamb or beef, or fresher seafood. Look out for blue cod from the South Island, green-lip mussels, snapper and for big appetites, grouper! The local free-range lamb is world-famous, but the cheese, manuka honey, fruit

and even ice-cream are all equally superb. And you cannot leave without trying a kiwi pavlova for dessert! If you enjoy wine, then Marlborough's Sauvignon Blancs are considered some of the best in the world – we include a wine tasting at a famous estate on our way through the region.

Our wonderful tour has been designed to make getting to New Zealand as easy as possible and covers all the awe-inspiring highlights of this remarkable country, as well as many of the less explored corners, such as our rural home-stay, the Art Deco city of Napier and Nelson with the Abel Tasman National Park. Our included trips on the TranzAlpine train, the helicopter flight over the staggering Franz Josef glacier and the visit to Mt Cook will surely be experiences that you will treasure for many years to come.



Wellington

DAY 1 - DEPARTURE

Travel to Heathrow airport for your overnight flight to Singapore on the award-winning Singapore Airlines.

DAY 2 - ARRIVAL IN SINGAPORE

On arrival, you'll transfer to the **four-star Swissotel Merchant Court**, with breakfast, located on the Singapore River and next to the many restaurants of Clarke Quay. This exciting stop-over allows time to relax and adjust to the time difference between flights. It also offers the opportunity to explore Singapore's unique mix of Indian, Chinese and Malay influences. You'll enjoy our tour of the riverfront area and some time in the beautiful botanic gardens, of which the orchid enclosure is an outstanding feature. Our hotel also has a large outdoor pool and Jacuzzi, as well as a fitness room. Our welcome dinner this evening provides the perfect opportunity for you to get to know your travelling companions.

DAY 3 - FREE DAY & FLY TO AUCKLAND

Today is at leisure to further explore all the attractions of Singapore. Visit the shopping mecca of Orchard Road, savour the cuisine of Little India, try a Singapore Sling at the Raffles Hotel or stroll along the waterfront and visit the incredible Gardens by the Bay – Singapore's 21st century version of Kew Gardens. In the evening we take the Singapore Airlines overnight direct flight to Auckland.

DAY 4 - ARRIVAL IN AUCKLAND

Welcome to New Zealand! You'll arrive in Auckland around midday and transfer to the **four-star Rydges Hotel** for two nights with breakfast, well-located for all the city's attractions. The rooms are some of the most spacious in the city and all have a bath with separate shower, hairdryer, minibar, safe, iron/board, TV, air-conditioning, tea/coffee-maker and free Wi-Fi. There is an indoor pool, a popular lobby bar and two dining venues, one of them a Japanese restaurant, as well as room service. The rest of your day is at leisure.

DAY 5 - AUCKLAND

Your sightseeing tour of the 'City of Sails' includes the panoramic city and harbour views from Bastion Point, trendy Parnell Village, the lovely bays of the waterfront drive and the vibrant Viaduct Harbour area. We also visit the Auckland Museum which gives an excellent introduction to the artistic legacy and

cultures of the peoples of the Pacific including the monumental carvings, buildings, canoes and taonga (treasures) of the Maori, as well as the diversity of cultures which now combine to form the rich tapestry of race, nationality and creed which is modern New Zealand. Your afternoon is free to explore the city further.

DAY 6 - BAY OF ISLANDS

Departing Auckland we head north over the Auckland Harbour Bridge along the Hibiscus Coast to view giant Kauri trees at the Parry Kauri Park. Continuing our journey over the gentle green landscape of the North Island we reach Paihia in the beautiful Bay of Islands in the afternoon. Here you'll take a guided tour of the Waitangi Treaty House, where in 1840 Maori chiefs and the original European settlers signed the Treaty of Waitangi, the basis of the future governance of New Zealand. Our hotel for the next two nights is the **four-star Scenic Hotel**, with breakfast.

DAY 7 - BAY OF ISLANDS CRUISE

This morning we see the Bay of Islands in the best way possible via a fascinating boat cruise meandering around the idyllic beaches of the islands that make this area so popular. If you're lucky, there's a chance you might see wild dolphins which are common in the Bay of Islands. Continue on to Cape Brett and the famous 'Hole in the Rock', through which the boat will sail slowly, conditions permitting, before we disembark at the historic small town of Russell. The first European settlement in New Zealand and just a 10-minute ferry trip from Paihia (ticket included), Russell is an ideal place for a spot of lunch or a relaxing walk along the waterfront. The rest of the afternoon is at your leisure to enjoy many of the activities the Bay of Islands has to offer.

DAY 8 - HAMILTON

This morning leave the Bay of Islands and travel south along the Twin Coast Discovery Highway through Whangarei to Auckland City, crossing the Harbour Bridge. We travel through the city then cross the Bombay Hills and traverse the fertile Waikato Valley before arriving in Hamilton, where we enjoy a visit to the spectacular Hamilton Gardens set on the banks of the Waikato River. The unique theme of Hamilton Gardens is 'the story of gardens', explored through a series of five garden collections. The Paradise Garden



Experience the Maori haka

Collection is a highlight of the gardens and features a Chinese Scholars' Garden, English Flower Garden, Japanese Garden of Contemplation, American Modernist Garden, Italian Renaissance Garden and a Persian Char Bagh Garden.

We stay overnight at the **four-star Novotel Hamilton Tainui** with breakfast.

DAY 9 - ROTORUA

This morning we visit a picturesque 500-acre park-like dairy farm, nestled on a hill with stunning 360-degree views of the Kaimai Ranges, Mount Maungatautari and the greater Waikato dairy country. Here we enjoy a rural tour of the fully functioning dairy farm, followed by a morning tea of delicious baked goods and local produce.

Then we take the short drive to Rotorua, a thermal wonderland. Rotorua has the most energetic thermal activity in the country with bubbling mud pools, gushing geysers, beautifully coloured hot springs and terrace formations created by the hot, mineral-rich waters. Rotorua is also renowned for its Maori cultural activities. We visit Te Puia – where our local



Milford Sound

Maori guide will explain traditional Maori arts and crafts and we'll view the famous Pohutu Geyser in the Whakarewarewa Thermal Valley. This evening you'll enjoy a visit to the Tamaki Maori Village, a re-creation of a typical Maori forest community, where we'll be treated to an evening of ceremonial rituals, storytelling and intriguing insights into Maori life, ending with a powerful cultural performance, before dining on the traditional Hangi buffet dinner (Maori feast) cooked the traditional Maori way in an earth oven. Our hotel is the **four-star Distinction Hotel**, with breakfast.

DAY 10 - NAPIER

Departing Rotorua we travel to the charming lakeside town of Taupo, stopping en-route at Huka Falls to marvel as the mighty Waikato River thunders through its narrow canyon. Then it's on to Napier, known as the Art Deco capital of the world. After an earthquake in 1931, the centre of the town was rebuilt in the Art Deco style which was in fashion at the time. On arrival we meet our local guides and take a fascinating walking tour of these beautiful Art Deco buildings. Our hotel is the excellent **four-star superior Scenic Hotel Te Pania**, with breakfast, overlooking the Pacific Ocean.

DAY 11 - WELLINGTON

You continue south to Wellington where we enjoy a night in New Zealand's capital city, staying at the **four-star James Cook Hotel Grand Chancellor**, with breakfast. Enjoy a sightseeing tour of Wellington with free time to explore the vibrant waterfront and beautiful gardens. We also visit Te Papa, New Zealand's outstanding National Museum, to learn about the shaping of its land, the spirit of its diverse peoples, its unique wildlife, landscapes and its distinctive popular culture.

DAY 12 - NELSON

Today we cruise to the South Island, across the Cook Strait by Interislander ferry, through the Marlborough Sounds, including the picturesque Queen Charlotte Sound and into Picton. We continue to Blenheim and the famous wine-producing region of Marlborough where we stop for some wine tasting. Our final destination today is Nelson, New Zealand's sunshine town, known for its many art and craft galleries, and relaxed atmosphere. Our hotel for the next two nights is the excellent **four-star Trailways or Rutherford Hotel Nelson**, with breakfast.

DAY 13 - ABEL TASMAN CRUISE

This morning, we join a catamaran cruise along the stunning shoreline of Abel Tasman National Park. En route you'll learn about the history of the park and view the famous Split Apple Rock, a fur seal colony and the park's famed golden beaches and crystal clear waters. For the more adventurous, there is the option of landing ashore at Anchorage to take the Pitt Head Loop Walk (2.5 miles). The 90-minute return walk features a track through sunny Manuka forest to Te Pukatea Bay, renowned as one of the most beautiful beaches in the National Park. The track travels via Pitt Head, the site of a Maori Pa (fortified village). All that remains of this strategic site are some earthworks and panoramic views of the coast. The option offers a safe sandy swimming beach, so you may choose to do the Pitt Head Loop Walk or relax on the beach. The Anchorage Hut offers filtered drinking water, shelter and flush toilets. The track is well-defined and requires a reasonable level of fitness. The boat will collect the walkers at Anchorage on its return down the coast. A packed lunch is included today. The rest of the afternoon at leisure in Nelson.

DAY 14 - CHRISTCHURCH

Travelling south through the Golden Downs Forest and over the Lewis Pass we arrive at the lovely alpine village of Hanmer Springs for a lunch stop (not included) before joining the upper reaches of the Canterbury Plains to the 'garden city' of Christchurch. Since the earthquake of 2011, the city's rebuilding programme is in full swing and there will be an opportunity to visit to the Re-Start Mall, the controversial 'Cardboard Cathedral' and the Botanic Gardens. Our hotel is the **three-star superior Quality Hotel Elms**, with breakfast.

DAY 15 - TRANZALPINE TRAIN & HELICOPTER FLIGHT

Today we traverse the Southern Alps aboard the world-famous TranzAlpine train to Arthurs Pass. From your modern panoramic carriage you'll see the farmland of the Canterbury Plains give way to the spectacular gorges and river valleys of the ice-fed Waimakariri River, crossing numerous bridges and viaducts en route. At Arthurs Pass, we are met by our coach for the journey to the West Coast, stopping in Hokitika to visit a Greenstone workshop where the local jade-like stone, highly prized by pre-European Maori, is crafted into exquisite jewellery. Continue south through forests and farmland, with views of the Alps to the east and the Tasman Sea to the west, to the village of Franz Josef. This afternoon prepare yourself for what will be one of your trip's highlights! On arrival you will experience this magnificent glacial alpine environment with a 20-minute scenic helicopter flight. View the incredible natural phenomenon of the glacier as it winds slowly down the ice-carved valleys from its origin in the mountains high above you. This exhilarating experience finishes with an amazing alpine landing. Our hotel tonight is the **four-star Scenic**, with breakfast.

DAY 16 - QUEENSTOWN

Continuing south, we travel past deserted beaches, through vibrant rainforests and tiny settlements. This wilderness forms part of the South West New Zealand World Heritage Area, so designated because South Westland and Fjordland have some of the most dramatic forest, mountain scenery and natural resources in the world. We travel over the scenic Haast Pass to the popular Lake Wanaka, and then on to the beautiful year-round resort of Queenstown where our hotel for the next two nights is the **four-star Copthorne Lakefront Resort**, with breakfast. The centre of bustling Queenstown is just a short walk away.

DAY 17 - FREE DAY IN QUEENSTOWN

Nestled below the rugged Remarkable Mountains, Queenstown enjoys an exceptionally scenic setting and is known as the 'adventure capital of the world'. Today is at leisure to enjoy all that this resort has to offer. Experience the thrill of a jet-boat ride along the Shotover River, a 4x4 safari, helicopter trips, guided walks, a cruise across Lake Wakatipu on the 100-year-old vintage steamboat TSS Earnslaw, or ride the Skyline Gondola high above Queenstown for superb views of the area – the choices are almost endless!

DAY 18 - MILFORD SOUND CRUISE

Leaving Queenstown we skirt the shores of Lake Wakatipu, and travel via Te Anau through the Homer Tunnel into the spectacular Cleddau valley and famous Milford Sound, arguably the most spectacular fjord in the country. A boat trip on the deep fjord waters between sheer granite cliffs rising thousands of feet, affords wonderful views of mile-high Mitre Peak and the 500-foot Stirling Falls. There is a good chance

Thermal pool in
Waioatapu, Rotorua



of seeing dolphins, fur seals or penguins during our trip before we return to the charming small lakeside resort of Te Anau. A packed lunch is included today. Our hotel in Te Anau is the **four-star Distinction Luxmore**, with breakfast. Late in the afternoon there will be time for an optional visit the nearby Glowworm caves, unique to New Zealand.

DAY 19 - OMARAMA

Today we travel back north and visit Arrowtown, a township with a colourful history - in its heyday this was a rough and ready frontier gold-mining boomtown. Nowadays, its popular main street is lined with some excellent art galleries, cafés and boutiques. We continue through the rugged Kawarau Gorge, pass pretty Lake Dunstan, cross the distinctive Central Otago countryside (where many scenes from the Lord of the Rings were filmed) and over the dramatic Lindis Pass to the vast Mackenzie Basin. Your overnight accommodation is the **three-star Heritage Gateway Hotel**, with breakfast, in the small rural community of Omarama.

DAY 20 - MOUNT COOK

A day with some more spectacular sights. We head north alongside the azure glacier-fed Lake Pukaki to Mount Cook, at 12,316ft New Zealand's highest mountain and surrounded by jagged snow-covered peaks. There's time for short walks in the spectacular Hooker Valley (depending on the weather) and a visit to the Edmund Hillary Alpine Centre (entrance fee), or for an optional helicopter flight over the spectacular West Coast glaciers. We continue towards the magnificent blue waters of Lake Tekapo and visit the Church of the Good Shepherd, before crossing Burkes Pass and the Canterbury Plains back into Christchurch and the **Quality Hotel Elms** for our last night in the country.

DAY 21 - RETURN FLIGHT

A fond farewell to New Zealand. Transfer to the airport for your flight home via Singapore.

DAY 22 - ARRIVE HOME

Arrive back in the UK after an incredible once-in-a-lifetime tour.

CHRISTMAS IN MADEIRA

8 days from only £2,099PP

December 2020

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR

Have yourself a merry little Christmas in magical Madeira. Based in the breathtaking bay of Funchal, experience the must-see sights of Madeira, the local festivities at Mercado dos Lavradores and a six-course gala Christmas dinner.

Have yourself a merry little Christmas in magical Madeira. Based in the breathtaking bay of Funchal, experience the must-see sights of Madeira, the local festivities at Mercado dos Lavradores and a six-course gala Christmas dinner.

Immerse yourself in the festive spirit of Funchal on this specially created solo tour of Madeira. It may be tiny, but this subtropical paradise offers impressive year-round gardens, spectacular coastlines and jagged peaks, while picturesque Funchal boasts an architectural charm and rich maritime heritage to match the island's natural splendour. Explore 'the Pearl of the Atlantic' at Christmas, with its inspirational gardens to the famous Monte toboggan ride and soaring peaks to the hidden Valley of the Nuns.

With fertile volcanic soil, Madeira is a plant-lover's dream with an enormous diversity of species, from imported purple-blossomed jacaranda trees, orchids and bird of paradise plants to its native Laurisilva forest. So much flourishes here in its mild climate all year round, making it a superb destination even in December.

Not to mention the incredible decorations that adorn this charming Portuguese island, with the bustling traditional Christmas market lining the Avenida Arriaga, with an eclectic backdrop of exotic flowers and festive lights. Our base for this special

time of year is the VidaMar Resort Hotel, with fantastic views of the bay of Funchal.

Treat your senses to the superb celebrations; with the sounds of Christmas folklore songs, sights of tropical flowers, scent of roasting chestnuts, and of course a taste of Madeira wine.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN MADEIRA

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Funchal, where you will be welcomed by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team.

On arrival, you'll be transferred to the **four-star VidaMar Resort Hotel**, surrounded by tropical gardens with panoramic views of Funchal bay. This evening there will be a drinks reception hosted by your tour manager so that you can get to know your travelling companions before moving on to dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – FUNCHAL

After breakfast, a local guide takes us on a walking tour of the historic centre of Funchal, often called 'little Lisbon' as it overlooks a spectacular harbour and boasts grand 18th-century buildings. Narrow streets wind through its centre, broadening out onto lively squares and tree-lined walkways. Inspiring sights include the Igreja do Colégio, a church with a plain exterior that belies its sumptuous Baroque interior,

Cabo Girao



and the 15th-century Sé cathedral, one of the few buildings dating from colonial times. It is the island's main religious building and features the original 16th-century altar, imposing arches and ornate gold-framed paintings; its ceiling, made from local wood, is one of Portugal's most beautiful. Devotees of modern architecture will love the Art Deco Mercado dos Lavradores or farmers' market, a hive of activity as shoppers fill their baskets with the island's sun-ripened produce.

A treat is in store as we pause for a tasting of the island's best-known export – Madeira wine. The styles of this fortified wine range from dry to lusciously sweet. In between is medium Verdelho, the variety the English traditionally serve with the crumbly sponge cake named after the wine. The afternoon is free for you to explore Funchal at your leisure, in all its festive glory.

DAY 3 – PALHEIRO GARDENS

After breakfast, we visit the Palheiro Gardens, world famous for its variety of flora and its beautiful setting in the hills overlooking Funchal. Palheiro was laid out in the early 19th century by a French landscape architect for the Count of Carvalhal before being acquired in the early 20th century by the Blandy family, famous wine producers. Over the next decades, the gardens were populated with thousands of plants from around the world, from North American sequoia trees to South African Proteas, all flourishing in Madeira's rich soils and clement weather.

This afternoon a real treat awaits, as we head to enjoy afternoon tea at the iconic Belmond Reid's Palace, no doubt decked out in sumptuous festive splendour. Set in subtropical gardens that overlook the Atlantic, relax and take a stroll before indulging in sumptuous freshly baked scones, pastries and dainty sandwiches with your choice of tea from the hotel's selection of 24 varieties, or splash out and treat yourself to a glass of champagne.

In the evening after our group dinner at the hotel you may wish to visit the Mercado dos Lavradores, the Farmers' Market, where on the 23rd it is traditional for locals to meet in the market and surrounding streets singing Christmas songs, dance and drink in the nearby bars, which are open throughout the night.

DAY 4 – EASTERN MADEIRA AND CHRISTMAS EVE

Today we explore the eastern seaboard, passing diverse landscapes from craggy coastlines to ancient forests. Ponta do Rostó is Madeira's easternmost point, on a sliver of land jutting out into the Atlantic, and offers dazzling panoramas. Following the northern coast, we call at sleepy Porto da Cruz, named after a large cross displayed to identify it to passing sailors.

We leave the village and track the coastline towards the mountainous interior and one of the highlights of the tour – the UNESCO-listed Ribeiro Frio National Park. Around 90 per cent of the park is covered by ancient Laurisilva or laurel trees, and the area features many endemic flora and fauna, such as ferns and the trocaz pigeon.

For the Portuguese Christmas Eve is the focal point of festivities and so this evening we will have a six-course gala Christmas dinner at the hotel to celebrate the festive season together in traditional Portuguese fashion.

DAY 5 – CHRISTMAS DAY

Christmas Day the world over is a day for doing little but spending it with friends. Make time to take advantage of the hotel's spa and relaxation facilities and the company of your fellow travellers and soak

PRICE INCLUDES

- Discover the Old Town of picturesque Funchal, on a tour led by a local guide
- Enjoy a tasting of the delicious and world-famous Madeira wines
- Admire the world-renowned Palheiro Gardens, exceptional for their variety of flora and stunning location overlooking Funchal
- Ascend to Curral das Freiras, or the Valley of the Nuns, until recently the almost-inaccessible mountain hideaway of a convent of nuns
- See the inspiration for some of Winston Churchill's paintings in Câmara de Lobos
- Take a tour of the idyllic Monte Palace Tropical Gardens with a local guide
- Discover Madeira's mountainous eastern coast, taking in the A-framed houses of Santana and the ancient Laurisilva forest of the UNESCO-listed Ribeiro Frio National Park
- Indulge in a six-course gala dinner on Christmas Eve
- Enjoy afternoon tea at Belmond Reid's Palace

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from selected airports, plus hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, plus breakfast and dinner
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

up the pleasant climate that makes Madeira such a desirable destination. This evening we'll have dinner together in one of the hotel's three restaurants.

DAY 6 – BOXING DAY IN MONTE

Near Funchal is the idyllic hilltop town of Monte, which we visit this morning. The town's landmark is its 18th-century church, the most important pilgrimage site in Madeira, with its black and white facade and twin towers.

We then visit the Monte Palace Tropical Garden, where you can either join our guided tour or wander at leisure. These oriental gardens are exquisite, complete with Asian-style bridges, arches and a pond filled with koi carp; they also house a historic tile collection gathered from Portuguese palaces, churches and private residences. Later we return Funchal, either by coach, cable car for a dramatic 15-minute descent to the capital, or if you're feeling adventurous, you could take the famous Monte toboggan ride. This afternoon is free to relax or explore.

DAY 7 – CURRAL DAS FREIRAS

Today we drive north to Madeira's dramatic interior and the Curral das Freiras or Valley of the Nuns. To appreciate the solitude of this place, we drive to Eira do Serrado, over 3,500 feet above sea level, part of a natural cauldron of jagged peaks and chasms, with time to soak up the glorious views down to the village of Curral das Freiras. Today it is also known for the sweet chestnuts cultivated on its terraced hillsides. Enjoy sampling these tasty treats – the very essence of Christmas!

We head to Câmara de Lobos, a fishing village built around a bay with some of Europe's highest cliffs forming a breathtaking backdrop. In the evening we will sit down together for a farewell dinner and reminisce on a magical Christmas experience in Madeira.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for our flight home.



CHRISTMAS IN SORRENTO & POMPEII

6 days from only £1,159PP

December 2020

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR

Piazza Tasso decorated
for Christmas

Spend Christmas on the spectacular Bay of Naples, experiencing the highlights of cosmopolitan Naples and historical Pompei. Embrace the dolce far niente outlook over this joyful season, enjoying a Christmas Day banquet with like-minded solo travellers.

Enjoy the festive season on the fabulous Bay of Naples, where the gentle, subtropical climate provides a welcome escape from the cold of the UK. As well as the convivial company of fellow solo travellers, enjoy the cultural highlights of Naples and Pompei with towering views of Vesuvius from your hotel as you indulge in a Christmas feast.

Our base for this tour is the picturesque town of Sorrento, now sprinkled with Christmas cheer. The resort came to prominence during the late 18th century when, attracted by its mild climate and outstanding natural beauty, Europe's aristocracy chose to spend their winters here, staying in sumptuous properties and grand hotels built along the cliff tops.

There's colour everywhere you look in its compact network of tiny streets and quaint squares: rich berry reds, jewel tones and lavish golds are set against a twinkling backdrop of fairy lights. Quaint Christmas decorations adorn the windows of pastel-coloured houses whilst the majestic Christmas tree takes centre stage in Piazza Tasso. Mouthwatering aromas drift from the numerous restaurants and trattorias, some humble and homely, others grand and ostentatious, with pavement cafés serving cappuccinos on every street corner.

We stay in the **Hotel Aminta**, a beautifully presented four-star hotel with modern touches and timeless elegance. Set amidst lemon and olive groves with breathtaking views of Vesuvius and the twinkling coastline of the Bay of Naples it is the perfect setting for an uplifting December escape.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN SORRENTO

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Naples, where you will be welcomed by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team. On arrival, you'll be transferred to the **four-star Hotel Aminta** in the splendid town of Sorrento, with breakfast and dinner included. This evening there will be a drinks reception hosted by your tour manager so that you can get to know your travelling companions before dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – SORRENTO WALKING TOUR

Our first full day in this centuries-old resort is at a suitably relaxed pace, beginning with a short walking tour. The Romans appreciated Sorrento's many qualities and the area is dotted with the remains of their opulent villas. You'll be enchanted by its maze of narrow alleyways, where the ochre, yellow and magenta facades and winding streets are now



Struffoli

delightfully decorated with strings of endless garlands, ruby-coloured poinsettias and carefully hand-crafted Nativity scenes. By night, the palm trees are adorned with twinkling lights, adding extra festive splendour to the bustling atmosphere of this quintessential Italian town.

The region has a long history of lemon cultivation, with highly prized Sorrento lemons given their own protected IGP (Indicazione Geografica Protetta) status. Sixty percent of lemon production goes into making limoncello liqueur, but in Sorrento it seems that anything can be made from the local citrus fruit, including soaps, cosmetics and, of course, ice-cream.

DAY 3 – CHRISTMAS EVE IN NAPLES

Today we drive north around the bay to the cosmopolitan city of Naples, whose UNESCO-listed historic core is recognised for its wealth of monuments. During our walking tour of the old town, a local guide will share fascinating stories about the city's millennia of history, the local culture and, naturally, the street food, which we'll also get to sample. From *struffoli* to *susamielli*, the Neapolitan's take Christmas so seriously that they have countless traditional Christmas desserts hailing from the region. *Struffoli* are an inviting combination of deep fried rolled doughballs, studded with glistening glacé cherries, oranges and a dusting of cinnamon. Whilst *mustaccioli* are a diamond-shaped festive treat made from spiced cake dipped in dark chocolate or candied fruit.

Piazza del Gesù Nuovo, Naples' beautiful main square, is flanked by the Gothic Santa Chiara basilica, a rare example of medieval architecture in Naples, and the stunning Gesù Nuovo church. The past is very much alive as we stroll along Via dei Tribunali, the main street during ancient Greek and Roman times; today it remains the beating heart of old Naples and where pizzerias and family-owned shops jostle for attention amidst centuries-old ruins. Another highlight is San Gregorio Armeno, the city's delightful Christmas street filled with colourful shops dedicated to the festive season – at all times of the year. But Christmas is particularly special, as you'll witness first-hand the skilled craftsmen working on intricate presepi, the delicate crèche figurines which bring the Nativity story to life, alongside the lively symphony of locals going about their day.

There's free time after the tour, so why not explore the archaeological museum, the finest in all Italy, or perhaps visit the massive Castel Nuovo that dominates the portside? You could even try an authentic Neapolitan pizza which the city is so famous for. Naples' magnificent cathedral is worth a visit even if it's just to marvel at its neo-Gothic façade. Later we return to the hotel in plenty of time to get ready for our delicious four-course Christmas Eve dinner.

DAY 4 – CHRISTMAS DAY

Today is a day for *dolce far niente*, sweetly doing nothing, which the Italians have elevated to an artform. Sit back in one of the hotel's comfy chairs by the bar, sit on the terrace and admire the view of Vesuvius, or if you are feeling particularly energetic you can take the hotel's complimentary shuttle bus to Sorrento's old town for a leisurely *passigliato* to build up an appetite for lunch, which will be a four-course banquet. For those wishing to walk to the heart of Sorrento there is a scenic path, Via Capodimonte, which is just over a mile (although you may wish to take the shuttle bus back up the hill to the hotel).

DAY 5 – POMPEII

Most people know the story of Pompeii and its fate, but today this site is so much more than a collection of

PRICE INCLUDES

- Enjoy a guided walk in Naples plus free time to explore this stunning city
- Discover the world-famous ruins of Pompeii with a guided tour
- Experience the joyous build up to Christmas on a walking tour of Sorrento

Plus, of course...

- Five nights in four-star accommodation including all local taxes, with breakfast and dinners, including welcome dinner,

Christmas Eve dinner, and Christmas Day lunch

- Return flights from selected airports and transfers to and from your hotel included
- The services of our experience and insightful tour manager throughout

Price excludes:

- Museum entries in Naples



ruins. Our guided tour of the Roman town highlights its astonishing state of preservation – even if you aren't especially interested in history, you can't fail to be impressed by its scale – streets, temples, baths and even the amphitheatre remain largely intact. Much of our knowledge about the Roman way of life, their habits, social structure, class system and domestic arrangements has come from Pompeii. Many buildings still have murals and mosaics, while others inscribed with graffiti describing political events, romantic entanglements and even gossip of the time. You can even see traffic-calming measures and a one-way system! Although endlessly fascinating,

Pompeii is also slightly eerie, particularly when you see the pained facial expressions of Vesuvius's victims preserved for eternity. A fascinating site, new discoveries are still being found every month: a well-preserved fresco of fighting gladiators, the remains of a horse and saddle and an ancient snack stall are amongst the latest finds.

In the evening we will sit down together for a farewell dinner and reminisce on a splendid Christmas experience in Sorrento.

DAY 6 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for our flight home.



CHRISTMAS IN KRAKOW

6 days from only £999PP

December 2020

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Experience Christmas in Krakow, a captivating city where past and present beautifully intertwines. With your fellow solo travellers, marvel at the Wieliczka Salt Mine, be charmed by Krakow's Old Town and feast on a traditional 12-dish Polish Christmas banquet.

Set on the banks of the Vistula River near the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, beautiful Krakow ranks with Prague and Vienna as one of the architectural gems of Central Europe – in fact, its entire historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city first became prominent a thousand years ago as the royal capital of Poland and remained so for 500 years, spanning both the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Its castle, the Wawel, evolved into a sumptuous royal palace and took full advantage of its position on the ancient trade routes to the Orient and Baltic.

The city's location and the trade in salt, which was extracted on a huge scale at the nearby Wieliczka mines, brought immense wealth and Krakow experienced its golden age during the 16th century, when learning and science prospered. Over the centuries, influence from Prussia and the cities of the Hanseatic League, and absorption within the Habsburg Empire, all made their marks on the marvellous architecture, art and culture of today's city.

Our base for our festive stay is the fantastic four-star Novotel Krakow Centrum. Situated next to the banks of the Vistula and close to Wawel Royal Castle, this modern hotel has a bar, restaurant and fitness facilities, including an indoor swimming pool, while

all rooms feature Wi-Fi, television, tea- and coffee-making facilities and safe. Its excellent location in the heart of Krakow is perfect for this special Christmas stay.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN KRAKOW

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Krakow, where you will be welcomed by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team.



On arrival, you'll be transferred to the **four-star Novotel Krakow Centrum**, ideally located just a short walk from the castle and overlooking the Vistula river. This evening there will be a drinks reception hosted by your tour manager so that you can get to know your travelling companions before moving on to dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – KRAKOW OLD TOWN AND MARKET SQUARE

After breakfast, today we will have a tour of Krakow's old town, one of the best-preserved medieval cities in central Europe. The city first became prominent a thousand years ago as the royal capital of Poland and remained so for 500 years, spanning both the Middle Ages and Renaissance.

At Krakow's heart is its magnificent medieval square – but there's so much more – over 6,000 historic buildings and monuments, a multitude of museums, two and a half million works of art, one of Europe's oldest universities and a fascinating Jewish quarter. Over the centuries, influence from Prussia and the cities of the Hanseatic League, and absorption within the Habsburg Empire, all made their marks on the marvellous architecture, art and culture of today's city.

The market square and Cloth Hall are famous throughout the world, but are especially picturesque when lit up with Christmas lights that twinkle among the festive market stalls, selling famous amber jewellery. Perhaps sample some *pierniki*, Polish gingerbread made with ginger, anis, nutmeg and cinnamon before being decorated with eye-catching icing. Our tour concludes at Wawel castle, which was home to Polish monarchs for centuries. You can visit the royal apartments, armoury and cathedral, where the greatest statesmen of Polish history are laid to rest.

The city was spared significant damage during the Second World War, so today it's a delight to explore and offers a real glimpse into the past. Yet Krakow is far from just a collection of buildings – its atmosphere is vibrant, with the past and present beautifully intertwined. This is especially true during the festive period where the singing of *kolędy*, Christmas carols, and people displaying their *szopka krakowska*, nativity scenes using Krakow landmarks.

After a free afternoon in the evening we will visit a nearby country restaurant set in a log cabin by a lake where along with dinner we will have a private folklore show with traditional Polish music and dancing.

DAY 3 – CHRISTMAS EVE IN KRAKOW

Today we will visit the Kazimierz district that was home to Krakow's thriving Jewish community up until WWII. Although its history is sad, recently it has become a thriving cultural neighbourhood that has proudly re-established itself as a centre of a Jewish community. We will have a guided tour of the neighbourhood including the Old Synagogue, with some free time to discover the neighbourhood's vibrant food scene over lunch. In the afternoon we will visit the moving Schindler factory, where you can learn more about the amazing stories of bravery and sacrifice endured by ordinary people.

In the evening we will have a Christmas Eve dinner at the hotel with the traditional 12 dishes that make up a Polish Christmas dinner. Known as *Wigilia*, the 24th December is an important date in the Polish Christmas calendar. To celebrate, friends and families rejoice over a table bursting with *barszcz czerwone* (beetroot soup), *kapusta z groszek* (cabbage with split peas), fried carp and a carrot, pickle and apple salad in a creamy mustard sauce, known simply as *jarzynowa sałatka* (vegetable salad). Of course, there are usually sweets too – in the form of poppy seed cake, soaked honey wheatberry dessert and Polish cheesecake. Sit back, relax, eat and make merry as you enjoy the most wonderful time of the year with your new-found friends.

DAY 4 – CHRISTMAS DAY

After a relaxing start to the morning with a generous buffet breakfast our local guide will take us on an epicurean tour of Krakow, sampling a multitude of local delicacies, such as grilled cheese with cranberry sauce, dumplings, traditional Polish Christmas wafers and many more. The rest of the day is at leisure – you can stay in the old town and explore the medieval winter wonderland, or return to the hotel and take advantage of the heated indoor pool and other spa facilities before tucking in to dinner with the rest of the group at the hotel this evening.

DAY 5 – WIELICZKA SALT MINE

Today we will visit the nearby town of Wieliczka which has been famous since the Middle Ages for its UNESCO-listed salt mine, that formed the bedrock of Krakow's wealth. This spectacular subterranean attraction is adorned by statues and even a cathedral, all sculpted from rock salt that looks like marble. Over

PRICE INCLUDES

- Enjoy a guided walk through the old town of Krakow and see the central square filled with Christmas market stalls
- Discover the UNESCO-listed salt mines of Wieliczka
- Experience a traditional folklore show with dinner
- Explore Krakow's culinary culture on a Christmas lunchtime food tour with a local guide
- Learn about Krakow's Jewish heritage with visits to the Old Synagogue and Oskar Schindler factory museum.

Plus, of course...

- Five nights in four-star accommodation including all local taxes, with breakfast and dinners, including a welcome and traditional Polish Christmas Eve dinners.
- Return flights from selected airports and transfers to and from your hotel included
- The services of our experience and insightful tour manager throughout



time the miners delved ever deeper into the depths of the earth, excavating giant halls of salt. After a guided visit of the mine we will return to Krakow where the rest of the day is at leisure for you to explore. For lunch, embrace the chance to try authentic Polish cuisine in one of the many traditional restaurants, serving up inviting meat platters, tempting pierogi (filled dumplings), popular potato pancakes known as *placki ziemniaczane*, and rustic stuffed cabbage rolls

called *golabki*. If you're feeling adventurous you may even want to try a Polish winter speciality: mulled beer!

This evening, re-join your fellow solo companions for a delicious farewell dinner, to share tales of a memorable Christmas experience.

DAY 6 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for our flight home.



Folklore show

CHRISTMAS IN VENICE & LAKE GARDA

7 days from only £1,299PP

December 2020

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



Experience a very Italian Christmas on this enchanting tour. Along with fellow solo travellers, get that festive feeling in Verona on Christmas Eve, with wine tasting in Bardolino and a Christmas Day cruise on Lake Garda to toast the season.

Indulge in an Italian Christmas, nestled in a picturesque lakefront setting of Riva del Garda. With its fine food and wine, beautiful sights and rich heritage, let the romantic region of Venice take you under its spell in all its festive splendour.

Lake Garda and Venice are magical at Christmas time: with the tree lined Piazza Catena now twinkling with lights, a shimmering harbourside ice rink in Bardolino, Di Gusto in Gusto market in Riva del Garda dedicated to the culinary specialities of the area, and the lavish Christmas tree opposite Venice's famous San Marco Basilica.

Christmas in Venice is extra special, with the peace and quiet allowing you to appreciate the famous sights with a feeling of tranquillity. Whilst the vibrant Christmas markets of Verona and Riva del Garda will have you feeling extra festive, with plenty of sights, sounds and smells to warm the senses.

Our base for the festive stay will be the **four-star Hotel Europa**, found in the heart of the old town of Riva with unrivalled views of the harbourside. Painted a shade of periwinkle blue, the charming and stylish hotel will no doubt be adorned with delightful Christmas decorations to celebrate the season. The incredible views combined with the twinkle of fairy lights and mellow candles create an idyllic atmosphere in which to enjoy the inviting menu, which often

features market-fresh and local ingredients. Relax, recharge and rejoice on this unforgettable Italian tour, with a Christmas twist.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN RIVA

Arrive at the airport for your flight, where you will be welcomed by your tour manager or a member of the



Pandoro, the classic Christmas treat of Verona

Riviera Travel team. On arrival, you'll be transferred to the **four-star Hotel Europa**, ideally situated on the lakefront in Riva del Garda, right in the heart of the old town, with unrivalled views of the historic port. There will be a drinks reception hosted by your tour manager so that you can get to know your travelling companions before moving on to a dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – RIVA DEL GARDA

Today we will explore Riva, our base for the next few days. We will explore the quaint old town, much of which dates to the late Middle Ages, and which at this time of the year is home to a bustling Christmas market with distinctly Germanic influences, due to Riva's long connections with Austria. The afternoon is free for you to explore independently, perhaps you may want to take advantage of the From Taste to Taste section of the market that brings finest food specialities of the Trentino area to Riva, and eat your way around the region savouring its high quality fresh produce such as its cheeses, cured meats, chestnuts, apples and dumplings.

DAY 3 – LAKE GARDA AND BARDOLINO WITH WINE TASTING

Today we travel down the eastern shore of Lake Garda, exploring towns and quaint lakeside villages along the

way. We will stop off at the town of Bardolino which is famous for its wines and we visit a local winery where we will learn about what makes Bardolino unique, and then see if we can remember as we sit indulge in a tasting session accompanied with some local finger food and snacks.

We then continue to the historic town of Garda which gave its name to the lake, where we have time to explore the beautiful cobbled alleyways of the old town. Why not take a leisurely lakeside stroll to enjoy the beautifully crafted nativity scene, or wander the family-run shops of the twinkling old town in search of a special souvenir? We then return to Riva where we have dinner together at the hotel.

DAY 4 – VERONA ON CHRISTMAS EVE

Today we travel to nearby Verona where Shakespeare based his timeless play Romeo and Juliet. We will see the city's rich heritage seeing the Roman amphitheatre, the countless renaissance houses harking back to Verona's prosperous trading history and the Piazza delle Erbi, the main market square and beating heart of the city throughout the centuries. Today you will see it buzzing and alive with activity as it hosts Verona's main Christmas market and people will be doing their last-minute present shopping and enjoying the traditional market stalls.

There are also many medieval and Renaissance squares and courtyards to explore, as well as a 12th-century cathedral housing a work by Titian. The fine late Renaissance Giusti Garden, with clipped box hedges and dazzling displays, will add splashes of colour to your lasting Christmas memories.

In the evening we will have a traditional Italian Christmas Eve dinner with musical accompaniment at the hotel. Afterwards you may wish to go out and witness the people of Riva going to midnight mass and placing the figure of the baby Jesus in their presepi, nativity crèches, marking the arrival of Christmas proper.

DAY 5 – CHRISTMAS DAY CRUISE ON LAKE GARDA

After a leisurely start to the morning we will take a Christmas cruise on the lake, complete with a complimentary glass of bubbly to get into the festive spirit, to the nearby port village of Limone.

After returning to Riva we will return to the hotel to enjoy a more typically British Christmas lunch with turkey and trimmings, in the company of your new-found travelling companions. The rest of the afternoon is free for you to while away as you wish: perhaps you

PRICE INCLUDES

- Enjoy a guided walk through the old town of Verona and see the Piazza delle Erbi, Juliet's balcony, and Roman amphitheatre
- Discover Venice, la Serenissima, during one of the quietest periods of the year with our expert guide
- Experience a Christmas Day cruise on lake Garda with a complimentary glass of prosecco
- Visit a local wine producer in Bardolino complete with tasting and snacks

Plus, of course...

- Six nights in four-star accommodation including all local taxes, with breakfast and dinners, including welcome dinner and one lunch.
- Return flights from selected airports and transfers to and from your hotel included
- The services of our experience and insightful tour manager throughout



The Basilica di San Marco

might want to walk along the lakeshore and see the town light up as dusk falls, or sit in the hotel's cosy lounge whilst sipping on a glass of mulled wine.

DAY 6 – BOXING DAY IN VENICE

Today on Boxing day we will travel to Venice to explore La Serenissima, one of the world's most spectacular cities, at a time of year when there are far fewer tourist crowds. We will have a guided introduction to the city followed by free time to explore Saint Mark's Square, the Rialto Bridge and many other of the most famous

sights in relative calm, a truly unique opportunity. The Basilica di San Marco is among Europe's most exotic cathedrals and one of the world's most splendid buildings. There are over 86,000 square feet of detailed mosaics, mostly from the 13th century. Another highlight is the magnificent Pala d'Oro, a gem-studded golden altarpiece containing over 250 enamelled panels.

DAY 7 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for our flight home.



Verona

NEW YEAR IN MADEIRA

8 days from only £2,399PP

December 2020

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR

Celebrate the New Year in splendid Madeira on our specially created solo tour. Stay in the stunning bay of Funchal, an ideal base for the must-visit sights, as well as for incredible views of Funchal's world-famous New Year's Eve fireworks.

Welcome 2021 in style with an incredible itinerary of sightseeing in Madeira, a 6-course gala dinner with live music and an unforgettable fireworks display. Along with like-minded solo travellers, see in the new year with an impressive fireworks display that for many years held the Guinness world record title of "Greatest Fireworks Show in the World".

Explore 'the Pearl of the Atlantic' this New Year, with its inspirational gardens to the famous Monte toboggan ride and soaring peaks to the hidden Valley of the Nuns. It may be tiny, but this subtropical paradise offers impressive year-round gardens, spectacular coastlines and jagged peaks, while picturesque Funchal boasts an architectural charm and rich maritime heritage to match the island's natural splendour. With fertile volcanic soil, Madeira is a plant-lover's dream with an enormous diversity of species, from imported purple-blossomed jacaranda trees, orchids and bird of paradise plants to its native Laurisilva forest. So much flourishes here in its mild climate all year round, making it a superb destination even in December.

Our base for this special time of year is the **VidaMar Resort Hotel**, with fantastic views of the bay of Funchal. Be charmed by the beauty of Madeira in all its glimmering glory at this special time of year. With an eclectic backdrop of exotic flowers and fairy lights, the festive cheer is in full swing – ready for you

to experience a New Year to remember.

Treat your senses to the superb celebrations; with the sounds of Christmas folklore songs continuing through into January, sights of someone the world's most impressive fireworks, scent of tropical flowers, and of course a taste of Madeira wine.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN MADEIRA

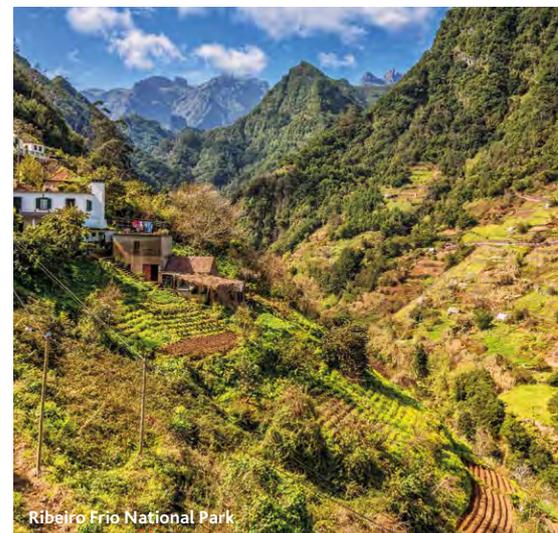
Arrive at the airport for your flight to Funchal, where you will be welcomed by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team.

On arrival, you'll be transferred to the four-star VidaMar Resort Hotel, surrounded by tropical gardens with panoramic views of Funchal bay. This evening there will be a drinks reception hosted by your tour manager so that you can get to know your travelling companions before moving on to dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – FUNCHAL

After breakfast, a local guide takes us on a walking tour of the historic centre of Funchal, often called 'little Lisbon' as it overlooks a spectacular harbour and boasts grand 18th-century buildings. Narrow streets wind through its centre, broadening out onto lively squares and tree-lined walkways. Inspiring sights include the Igreja do Colégio, a church with a plain exterior that belies its sumptuous Baroque interior, and the 15th-century Sé cathedral, one of the few

buildings dating from colonial times. It is the island's main religious building and features the original 16th-century altar, imposing arches and ornate gold-framed paintings; its ceiling, made from local wood, is one of Portugal's most beautiful. Devotees of modern architecture will love the Art Deco Mercado dos Lavradores or farmers' market, a hive of activity



Ribeiro Frio National Park

as shoppers fill their baskets with the island's sun-ripened produce.

A treat is in store as we pause for a tasting of the island's best-known export – Madeira wine. The styles of this fortified wine range from dry to lusciously sweet. In between is medium Verdelho, the variety the English traditionally serve with the crumbly sponge cake named after the wine. The afternoon is free for you to explore Funchal at your leisure, in all its shimmering splendour.

DAY 3 – EASTERN MADEIRA

Today we explore the eastern seaboard, passing diverse landscapes from craggy coastlines to ancient forests. Ponta do Rosto is Madeira's easternmost point, on a sliver of land jutting out into the Atlantic, and offers dazzling panoramas. Following the northern coast, we call at sleepy Porto da Cruz, named after a large cross displayed to identify it to passing sailors.

We leave the village and track the coastline towards the mountainous interior and one of the highlights of the tour – the UNESCO-listed Ribeiro Frio National Park. Around 90 per cent of the park is covered by ancient Laurisilva or laurel trees, and the area features many endemic flora and fauna, such as ferns and the trocaz pigeon.

DAY 4 – PALHEIRO GARDENS AND NEW YEAR'S EVE

Enjoy a leisurely breakfast with free time this morning to enjoy your beautiful surroundings. This afternoon, we visit the Palheiro Gardens, world famous for its variety of flora and its beautiful setting in the hills overlooking Funchal. Palheiro was laid out in the early 19th century by a French landscape architect for the Count of Carvalhal before being acquired in the early 20th century by the Blandy family, famous wine producers.

In the evening, dress up for a night of revelry with your fellow travellers. We start with cocktails before moving on to a 6-course gala dinner with live music. The party then moves outside to the hotel terrace where magnificent magentas, glowing greens and bursts of blue cascade across a jet black canvas as some of the most impressive pyrotechnics your eyes have ever seen pop, fizz, bang and sparkle into the night's sky as you witness Funchal's world-famous New Year's fireworks display that for many years held the Guinness world record title of "Greatest Fireworks Show in the World". Sip on your favourite cocktail amongst your fellow travellers as you enjoy the spectacular display, not forgetting the age-old tradition of crossing arms with new-found friends to sing Auld Lang Syne – now bathed in the glow of the fireworks.

But the night is still young! A DJ then helps us usher in the New Year with a night of music and dancing until the early hours of 2021.

DAY 5 – NEW YEAR'S DAY

It's New Year's Day, a day for relaxing, recovering from last night's exertions, and perhaps taking a bracing constitutional walk to welcome in 2021. Luckily with year round warm weather such a walk will be far more pleasant than in the UK. If you'd rather relax and recharge in the comfort of the hotel, perhaps unwind in the pool or Thalasso spa, with views of the tranquil sea. This evening we'll have dinner together in one of the hotel's three restaurants.

DAY 6 – MONTE

Near Funchal is the idyllic hilltop town of Monte, which we visit this morning. The town's landmark is its 18th-century church, the most important pilgrimage

PRICE INCLUDES

- Discover the Old Town of picturesque Funchal, on a tour led by a local guide
- Enjoy a tasting of the delicious and world-famous Madeira wines
- Admire the world-renowned Palheiro Gardens, exceptional for their variety of flora and stunning location overlooking Funchal
- Ascend to Curral das Freiras, or the Valley of the Nuns, until recently the almost-inaccessible mountain hideaway of a convent of nuns
- See the inspiration for some of Winston Churchill's paintings in Câmara de Lobos
- Take a tour of the idyllic Monte Palace Tropical Gardens with a local guide
- Discover Madeira's mountainous eastern coast, taking in the A-framed

houses of Santana and the ancient Laurisilva forest of the UNESCO-listed Ribeiro Frio National Park

- Indulge in a six-course gala dinner on New Year's Eve
- Experience the world-famous Funchal fireworks display
- Enjoy afternoon tea at Belmond Reid's Palace

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from selected airports, plus hotel transfers
- Seven nights in four-star accommodation inclusive of all local taxes, plus breakfast and dinner
- The services of our experienced and insightful tour manager throughout

site in Madeira, with its black and white facade and twin towers.

We then visit the Monte Palace Tropical Garden, where you can either join our guided tour or wander at leisure. These oriental gardens are exquisite, complete with Asian-style bridges, arches and a pond filled with koi carp; they also house a historic tile collection gathered from Portuguese palaces, churches and private residences. Later we return Funchal, either by coach, cable car for a dramatic 15-minute descent to the capital, or if you're feeling adventurous, you could take the famous Monte toboggan ride.

Next, a real treat awaits, as we head to enjoy afternoon tea at the iconic Belmond Reid's Palace, no doubt decked out in sumptuous festive splendour. Set in subtropical gardens that overlook the Atlantic, relax and take a stroll before indulging in sumptuous freshly baked scones, pastries and dainty sandwiches with your choice of tea from the hotel's selection of 24 varieties with good company and lovely views across Funchal's rocky coastline.

DAY 7 – CURRAL DAS FREIRAS

Today we drive north to Madeira's dramatic interior and the Curral das Freiras or Valley of the Nuns. To appreciate the solitude of this place, we drive to Eira do Serrado, over 3,500 feet above sea level, part of a natural cauldron of jagged peaks and chasms, with time to soak up the glorious views down to the village of Curral das Freiras. Today it is also known for the sweet chestnuts cultivated on its terraced hillsides. Enjoy sampling these tasty treats – the very essence of Christmas!

We head to Câmara de Lobos, a fishing village built around a bay with some of Europe's highest cliffs forming a breathtaking backdrop. In the evening we will sit down together for a farewell dinner and look back on a magical New Year's experience in Madeira, sharing stories with new-found friends about what the next year might bring.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for our flight home.

Monte Palace Tropical Garden



NEW YEAR IN KRAKOW

5 days from only £1,099PP

December 2020

SINGLE-CENTRE TOUR



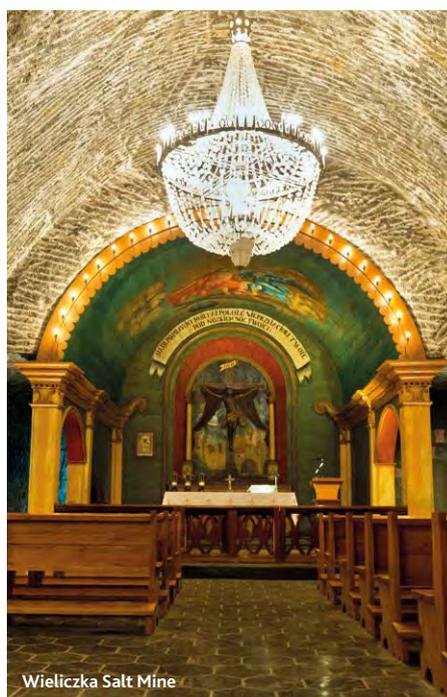
Krakow

Toast to 2021 in Krakow, a fascinating city where past and present magnificently intertwines. With likeminded solo travellers, marvel at the Wieliczka Salt Mine, be charmed by Krakow's Old Town and see in the New Year with a Polish banquet and live music.

Set on the banks of the Vistula River near the foothills of the Carpathian Mountains, beautiful Krakow ranks with Prague and Vienna as one of the architectural gems of Central Europe – in fact, its entire historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site. The city first became prominent a thousand years ago as the royal capital of Poland and remained so for 500 years, spanning both the Middle Ages and Renaissance. Its castle, the Wawel, evolved into a sumptuous royal palace and took full advantage of its position on the ancient trade routes to the Orient and Baltic.

The city's location and the trade in salt, which was extracted on a huge scale at the nearby Wieliczka mines, brought immense wealth and Krakow experienced its golden age during the 16th century, when learning and science prospered. Over the centuries, influence from Prussia and the cities of the Hanseatic League, and absorption within the Habsburg Empire, all made their marks on the marvellous architecture, art and culture of today's city.

Our base for our festive stay is the fantastic **four-star Novotel Krakow Centrum**. Situated next to the banks of the Vistula and close to Wawel Royal Castle, this modern hotel has a bar, restaurant and fitness facilities, including an indoor swimming pool,



Wieliczka Salt Mine

while all rooms feature Wi-Fi, television, tea- and coffee-making facilities and safe. Its excellent location in the heart of Krakow is perfect for this unforgettable New Year stay.

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN KRAKOW

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Krakow, where you will be welcomed by your tour manager or a member of the Riviera Travel team.

On arrival, you'll be transferred to the **four-star Novotel Krakow Centrum**, ideally located just a short walk from the castle and overlooking the Vistula river. This evening there will be a drinks reception hosted by your tour manager so that you can get to know your travelling companions before moving on to dinner at the hotel.

DAY 2 – KRAKOW OLD TOWN AND NEW YEAR'S EVE

After breakfast, today we will have a tour of Krakow's old town, one of the best-preserved medieval cities in central Europe. The city first became prominent a thousand years ago as the royal capital of Poland and remained so for 500 years, spanning both the Middle Ages and Renaissance. At Krakow's heart is its magnificent medieval square – but there's so much



Baltic amber

more – over 6,000 historic buildings and monuments, a multitude of museums, two and a half million works of art, one of Europe's oldest universities and a fascinating Jewish quarter. Over the centuries, influence from Prussia and the cities of the Hanseatic League, and absorption within the Habsburg Empire, all made their marks on the marvellous architecture, art and culture of today's city.

The main square and Cloth Hall are famous throughout the world, but are especially picturesque when lit up with fairy lights that twinkle among the festive market stalls, selling famous amber jewellery. Perhaps sample some *pierniki*, Polish gingerbread made with ginger, anis, nutmeg and cinnamon before being decorated with eye-catching icing. Our tour concludes at Wawel castle, which was home to Polish monarchs for centuries. You can visit the royal apartments, armoury and cathedral, where the greatest statesmen of Polish history are laid to rest.

This evening is New Year's Eve and we will see the coming year in with style and fun at our hotel. Along with an exquisite 4-course dinner including your choice of a bottle of wine or vodka (this is Poland after all!) and a half bottle of bubbly, an evening buffet, a DJ and dedicated dance area, and plenty of entertainment activities to enjoy with your tour companions.

DAY 3 – NEW YEAR'S DAY

After a relaxing start to the morning with a generous buffet breakfast our local guide will take us on an epicurean tour of Krakow, sampling a multitude of local delicacies, such as grilled cheese with cranberry sauce, dumplings, traditional Polish Christmas wafers and many more.

The rest of the day is at leisure – you can stay in the old town and explore the medieval winter wonderland, or return to the hotel and take advantage of the heated indoor pool and other spa facilities.

DAY 4 – WIELICZKA SALT MINE

Today we will visit the nearby town of Wieliczka which has been famous since the Middle Ages for its UNESCO-listed salt mine, that formed the bedrock of Krakow's wealth. Over time the miners delved ever deeper into the depths of the earth, excavating giant halls of salt, even carving out an entire cathedral. After a guided visit of the mine we will return to Krakow where the rest of the day is at leisure for you to explore.

PRICE INCLUDES

- Enjoy a guided walk through the old town of Krakow and see the central square filled with Christmas market stalls
 - Discover the UNESCO-listed salt mines of Wieliczka
 - Explore Krakow's culinary culture on a festive lunchtime food tour with a local guide
- Plus, of course...**
- Four nights in four-star accommodation including all local taxes, with breakfast and dinners, including welcome dinner and New Year's Eve party with drinks and entertainment.
 - Return flights from selected airports and transfers to and from your hotel included
 - The services of our experience and insightful tour manager throughout
- Price excludes**
- Entry to Wawel castle royal apartments



Polish pierogi

For lunch, embrace the chance to try authentic Polish cuisine in one of the many traditional restaurants, serving up inviting meat platters, tempting *pierogi* (filled dumplings), popular potato pancakes known as *placki ziemniaczane*, and rustic stuffed cabbage rolls called *golabki*. If you're feeling adventurous you may even want to try a Polish winter speciality: mulled beer!

In the evening we will sit down together for a final farewell dinner and reminisce on a magical New Year's experience and make plans for the coming 12 months ahead.

DAY 5 – RETURN FLIGHT

Transfer to the airport for our flight home.



Wawel castle

European River Cruises



Cruise into the heart of Budapest on one of our five-star ships

Embark on extraordinary journeys along Europe's stunning rivers, such as the mighty Danube and the sun-kissed Rhône, on our river cruise departures exclusively for solo travellers. So much is included with your cruise, from a spacious cabin for one to expert-led tours – all without a single supplement.

Modern five-star ships

Enjoy the luxuries of a boutique hotel, including a restaurant, bar, pool, sauna, fitness suite and complimentary Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary).

Spacious suites and cabins

Our suites and cabins feature hotel-style beds, en-suite bathrooms and river views. Most have full-length glass doors which open up to a French balcony.



MS Jane Austen



Standard suite bathroom, MS Thomas Hardy



MS Douro Elegance



Exceptional dining

Indulge in outstanding cuisine on board and enjoy informal free seating. Complimentary tea and coffee are available on board.



Shore excursions and expert-led tours

Our inspired itineraries include fascinating tours with knowledgeable and engaging local guides and for 2020 our river cruises include even more with a tour in every port. There's also free time to explore on your own and ample time to relax and watch the world go by. If you wish to immerse yourself in local culture, there are opportunities to explore at leisure or personalise your holiday with a special excursion.



Strasbourg old town

So much is included

- Insightful tours and excursions with knowledgeable local guides at every port of call
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and tour manager
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew
- Complimentary tea and coffee in your cabin
- Complimentary Wi-Fi on board (connection speeds may vary)
- Return flights from a choice of regional airports or travel by Eurostar (a supplement may apply)
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- We're a fully-bonded member of ABTA, ATOL and IATA, so your Riviera Travel holiday is safe and secure

Don't just take our word for it

"We had the most amazing time. The ship was fantastic as was the food and the crew were exceptional. They were always on hand to answer any questions or solve any problems; nothing was too much trouble. The guided tours were more than interesting with very knowledgeable guides. Would highly recommend this river cruise to anyone looking for a little luxury mixed with a little intellect and history and a lot of fun."

A & H Parsons



Parliament Building, Budapest



The Blue Danube

8 DAYS
from only **£1,699**

April 2021

The glories of Vienna, Budapest and Salzburg are revealed on this splendid cruise along Europe's most cultured river. Explore fascinating medieval cities, admire superb baroque architecture and immerse yourself in the majestic surroundings that inspired the music of Strauss and Mozart.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Budapest

Fly to Budapest and transfer to your cruise ship. Overnight sailing.

DAY 2 – Esztergom

Included morning visit to Esztergom Basilica. Afternoon and evening sailing towards Slovakia.

DAY 3 – Bratislava

Included morning guided tour of Bratislava with free time to explore. Afternoon and overnight sailing towards Austria.

DAY 4 – Durnstein & Melk Abbey

Included morning guided tour of Durnstein. Included afternoon guided tour of Melk Abbey. Evening and overnight sailing towards Linz.

DAY 5 – Salzburg or Linz

Morning guided tour of Linz or a full day tour to Salzburg. Evening and overnight sailing.

DAY 6 – Vienna

Included morning guided tour of Vienna with free time to explore. Classical music recital on board this evening. Overnight sailing.

DAY 7 – Budapest

Morning sailing. Included afternoon guided tour of Budapest with free time to explore. Gala dinner and Hungarian folklore show on board this evening.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return journey.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Budapest

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Budapest from where you will be taken to your cruise ship. The dedicated crew are there to welcome you on board, ensuring you settle in and familiarise yourself with this first-class floating hotel. There's always a sense of expectancy and excitement on the eve of a cruise and, after an excellent dinner in the stylish restaurant, conversation is sure to revolve around the delights ahead. (D)

DAY 2 – Esztergom

Overnight we have cruised upstream to Esztergom, one of Hungary's oldest towns, a royal capital during medieval times and today the seat of the country's archbishop. We have a guided tour of the famous neoclassical basilica, standing sentinel over the Danube on the border with Slovakia, and boasting one of the world's largest altarpieces and a wealth of priceless religious artefacts. The castle is also worth exploring; it was the seat of government until the Ottomans invaded in the 16th century. Nestling below are myriad atmospheric churches resonating with the enchanting sounds of choir; this is the best of provincial Hungary and is little changed since Habsburg times. As you enjoy your first lunch on board we gently leave Esztergom in our wake, affording a fascinating opportunity to compare the different landscapes, towns and villages of Hungary on one river bank and of Slovakia on the other. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Bratislava

After a delicious breakfast, this morning we explore Slovakia's fast-emerging capital city, Bratislava, on a guided tour. Until recently swathed in the drab uniformity of Communism, the city has rekindled the splendour of its imperial past in its beautifully restored old town. Equally impressive is the imposing 17th-century castle commanding expansive views across the Danube.

You'll have plenty of free time to explore the cobble-stoned streets of this captivating city – so what's it to be? Why not head to the regal Primatial Palace? Built in the late 1700s in a classical style, the once home to the archbishop of Esztergom now holds a rare collection of tapestry works from the 17th-century. For incredible views, you could take a walk across the Most SNP to the UFO tower, near the Sad Janka Kráľa city park, which stands at 95 metres above ground. Or simply head to the old town to absorb the café culture with a freshly brewed coffee and an indulgent skalický trdelník, a hollow pastry treat which comes with the likes of almonds, apricots or walnuts, before being dusted with sugar – some bakeries even add their own twist with an ice cream topping.

This afternoon we cruise into Lower Austria, a peaceful, bucolic region and home to some of the country's best wines. By now the stresses of everyday life seem distant as you absorb the ever-changing scenes we pass: children



playing on the river banks, young couples strolling arm in arm like generations before them, vigneron carefully pruning their vines, and cobbled quaysides lined by half-timbered buildings. You'll marvel as the Captain skilfully navigates the ship along the serene river and through locks whose mechanisms never cease to fascinate, as we cruise towards Dürnstein during dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Dürnstein & Melk

Dürnstein is known principally for the ice-blue tower of its abbey, which dominates the view, and the castle where Richard the Lionheart was imprisoned in 1192 after being shipwrecked on his return from the crusades. This morning we take a guided walking tour to explore this memorable city further. Set on a rocky outcrop high above the river, the



Your cruise price includes

- 7 visits and tours including guided tours in Vienna, Salzburg or Linz, Budapest, Bratislava and Dürnstein; and visits to Esztergom, and Melk Abbey
 - 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
 - All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure (except one lunch), including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
 - Live classical quartet recital on board
 - Hungarian folklore show on board
 - Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
 - Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)
- Plus, of course...
- Return scheduled flights from 10 regional airports*
 - Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
 - Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
 - All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
 - No surcharges guaranteed
 - ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection
- *A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

castle is now ruined, but it's easy to imagine England's legendary monarch seething with frustration far from home, while waiting for his family to raise funds to pay his ransom.

After lunch you visit the remarkable Melk Abbey. Nothing quite prepares you for your first sight of this enormous honey-coloured building, standing resplendent above the surrounding countryside. Originally a castle, it was gifted to the Benedictine Order in the 11th-century and, although reconstructed in Baroque style during the 18th century, it has remained a monastic school and monastery ever since. The Abbey is renowned for its 214-yard-long Emperor's Gallery lined with portraits, many fine rooms and an ornate library. After we re-join the ship, dinner is served during the final part of our cruise upstream through the pretty Nibelungengau, immortalised in the music of Wagner. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Salzburg or Linz

Reaching Linz, you will have the choice of two included excursions. You can stay in the city and take a guided walking tour, exploring the charming baroque old town. At its heart you'll see one of the finest squares in Austria, lined by grand pastel-coloured facades with an impressive central Trinity Column of white marble, crowned by a gilded sunburst. There's also the fortress-like castle, built high above the city by Emperor Friedrich III, now a museum housing a fine collection of nineteenth and twentieth-century artworks. Alternatively, join our included tour to Salzburg, once an independent state whose archbishops turned it into one of the most sophisticated cities north of the Alps. Dominating the skyline is one of Europe's largest stone fortresses, the Hohensalzburg, while beneath its walls church domes and spires rise from the delightful Altstadt, or old town. Then there's the wonderful Hellbrunn Palace and the splendid formal gardens of the Mirabell Palace – a must for horticulture

fans. This morning discover some of the city's main sights in the company of an expert local guide, then you're free to explore as you wish. Everywhere there are sights associated with the city's most famous resident, Mozart, who played the harpsichord aged three, composed rudimentary music at five and wrote his first opera when he was 11! Please note lunch is not included on this full day excursion to Salzburg; however, the ship will offer a packed lunch.* We return to the ship for another splendid dinner, as the incredible views towards Vienna glide by. (B,*L,D)

DAY 6 – Vienna

For many, today's visit to Vienna will be one of the highlights of the cruise. The city's very name provokes images of elegance, fine music, wide boulevards, Baroque architecture and a rich tapestry of peoples who were drawn here from all corners of Europe. For 200 years until the First World War, Vienna was the cultural centre of Europe and many of the showpiece buildings, galleries, aristocratic palaces and magnificent churches you see today were built to reflect its imperial status. The city's most iconic monument is the breathtaking Saint Stephen's Cathedral, whose striking multicoloured roof and huge Gothic South Tower dominate the skyline. There's also the colossal Hofburg, the former royal court that is now home to a collection of museums, the Crown Jewels and the Spanish Riding School, and the Vienna Boys' Choir. Then there are the lavish Imperial Apartments and an outstanding collection of relics of the Holy Roman Empire, including, allegedly, the sabre of Charlemagne himself. The Kunsthistorisches Museum, which contains the world's fourth largest collection of paintings, is just across the road.

This morning we enjoy a tour in the company of a local guide who will offer insights into why Vienna is one of Europe's great capitals. The city was the seat of the

Habsburg emperors and home to some of the world's finest classical composers, including Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart and, of course, a whole family of Strausses. During the afternoon you're free to explore as you wish. Take a stroll in the Prater, notable for the huge Ferris wheel that features in several Cold War spy thrillers. Or, for something quite different, visit the Schonbrunn Palace, a former royal residence now housing a range of world-class museums and galleries. Perhaps, though, just take a stroll through Vienna's atmospheric side streets, or enjoy a coffee and a slice of delicious Sachertorte in one of the elegant coffee houses. No visit to Vienna is complete without a live musical experience and this evening we've arranged truly the 'icing on the cake', a classical recital on board. After dinner listen to exquisite music, played in the city of its creation-a wonderful finale to the day. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Budapest

Enjoy a leisurely morning breakfast as we cruise majestically through Hungary's peaceful pastoral landscape towards Budapest. After lunch we enjoy a sightseeing tour of this captivating city, which truly lives up to its reputation as the 'Pearl of the Danube'. The twin cities of Buda, built around the hilltop fortress, and Pest, with its wide boulevards, were fought over through the centuries. The Ottomans ruled here for 150 years before being ousted in the late 17th-century, but their legacy lives on in the many thermal baths fed by hot springs, giving rise to Budapest's other sobriquet – the 'City of Spas'. After the end of Ottoman rule, Budapest became an imperial city of the Habsburg Empire, attracting great cultural and commercial wealth. Castle Hill is Budapest in microcosm: two churches, seven museums and a theatre among streets and squares with their own special atmosphere and a dramatic view across the river to the awe-inspiring neo-Gothic Parliament Building.



Budapest – Day 7



Melk Abbey – Day 4



Budapest's endless galleries, museums, outstanding Art Nouveau architecture and excellent shopping offer a fittingly elegant end to your Danube cruise. After our walking tour, you'll have plenty of time to explore and immerse yourself in the local culture and history.

This evening's Gala Dinner closes with a Hungarian folklore show, giving you time to bid farewell to your travelling companions and reflect on all the inspirational places, sights and sounds you have experienced on a truly 'imperial' cruise. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

Personalise your holiday

Visit the Spanish Riding School, Vienna

Enjoy a visit to the Spanish Riding School, the only institution in the world that has practised classical equitation in the Renaissance tradition of the haute école for over 440 years and continues to do so. From €15 per person.

My view



Insider knowledge

Enjoy a stroll along the charming cobblestoned streets of Dürnstein. The town is also renowned for delicious jams and liqueurs, made with the highly prized apricots of the Wachau Valley.

Read

White Stallion of Lipizza by Marguerite Henry. The magnificent Lipizzan stallions of Vienna come to life in this insightful historical novel.

Drink

The Wiener Melange originated in the elegant cafés of Vienna. This speciality coffee, similar in style to a cappuccino, is the perfect accompaniment to a flaky apple strudel.

Veronika
Cruise Director



Lyon - Day 2

Burgundy, the River Rhône & Provence

8 DAYS
from only **£1,799**

March 2021

Enjoy the scenic wine regions in the south of France. From lush terraced vineyards and sun-baked hills, to dramatic rugged gorges and medieval towns, with their delightful streets and charming architecture.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Lyon

Fly to Lyon, Marseille or Montpellier, or take the Eurostar / TGV to Lyon and transfer to your cruise ship.

DAY 2 – Lyon

Included morning guided tour of Lyon with free time to explore. Afternoon and evening sailing towards Chalon.

DAY 3 – Beaune and Burgundy

A morning visit to Beaune for a wine tasting and free time to explore. Afternoon and overnight sailing.

DAY 4 – Vienne and Tournon

Included morning guided tour of Vienne. Free time in the evening to explore Tournon.

DAY 5 – Ardèche Gorges

Morning cruising to Le Pouzin. Included visit to Ardèche Gorges. Overnight sailing to Arles.

DAY 6 – Arles and Pont du Gard

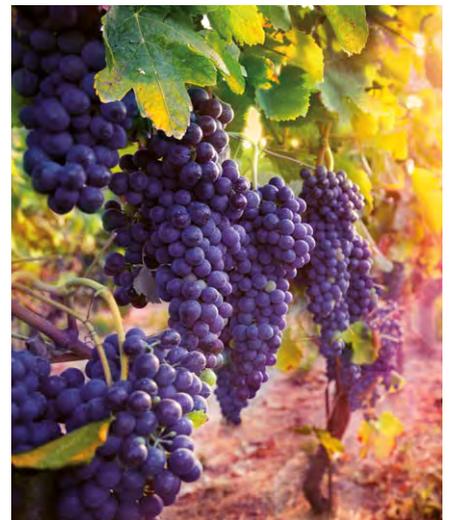
Included morning guided tour of Arles. Included afternoon excursion to Pont du Gard. Evening sailing to Avignon.

DAY 7 – Avignon

Included morning guided tour of Avignon with free time to explore.

DAY 8 – Return home.

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return journey.



Please note: on dates marked with an asterisk in the price booklet, this cruise operates in reverse order. You will experience the same tours and visits.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Lyon

Arrive for your flight to Lyon, Marseille or Montpellier, or take the Eurostar from London St Pancras International to Paris Gare du Nord, where you will be met by a guide and escorted on a coach transfer to Gare de Lyon to board a high-speed TGV to Lyon. On arrival we transfer by coach to our ship moored in Lyon's historic centre. Our dedicated English-speaking crew will welcome you on board and help you to your cabin. After settling in to your spacious and tastefully furnished accommodation, there's time to familiarise yourself with this floating five-star hotel. (D)

DAY 2 – Lyon

After our first splendid breakfast, we've a leisurely start enjoying a guided tour of Lyon, one of France's most fascinating cities. The Rhône Valley had been the route of choice for marauding armies and peaceful traders for centuries, and Lyon's current site, at the confluence of the Rhône and Saône Rivers, cried out to be fortified. In 43 BC the Romans founded the city, which subsequently grew in importance; the Emperor Claudius, conqueror of Britain, was born here. There are many Roman remains to see, but it was the production of silk that brought Lyon to prominence during the Middle Ages, and throughout the city you can see signs of the wealth that poured in – Renaissance buildings, imposing churches and Europe's largest pedestrian square, Place Bellecour, with a statue of Louis XIV as its focus.

The old town, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is crammed with antique shops and intriguing traboules – narrow covered passageways enabling silk merchants to transport their wares to the river without getting wet – that today are a joy to amble through. As well as its glorious architecture, Lyon is generally acknowledged as France's (and to locals the world's) gastronomic capital. In fairness it has much to commend it: nouvelle cuisine was invented near here and the city boasts a huge array of speciality food shops and eateries, including 20 restaurants with one or more Michelin stars and countless little places to eat.

While you enjoy your first lunch the ship quietly slips its mooring. Cruising upstream, we catch the first glimpses of the vine-clad slopes of the hazy green Beaujolais hills as we approach one of the world's most revered red wine-producing regions. On our left we see the picturesque villages of Morgon, Fleurie, Juliéna, Chénas and many more, while on the right you may be lucky enough to catch a glimpse of snow-capped Mont Blanc – Western Europe's highest mountain. As the afternoon drifts into evening and we cruise past the town that gives them their name, the white wines of Mâcon hold sway – and what could be better than a cool, crisp glass in the lounge before enjoying this evening's culinary delights in the restaurant, prepared by our outstanding chef. (B,L,D)



DAY 3 – Beaune and Burgundy

Rising this morning we're berthed in Chalon, gateway to Burgundy and home of Nicéphore Niépce, the inventor of photography. On this morning's tour we see some of the pretty villages that produce some of the world's most sublime wines – Meursault, Volnay, Pommard, Gevrey-Chambertin and many more. Nearby is medieval Beaune, Burgundy's wine capital. At its centre is the Hospices de Beaune, also known as the Hôtel-Dieu. Originally built in the 15th-century as a hospital for the

disadvantaged, it's a jewel of High Gothic architecture, instantly recognisable for its colourful glazed roof tiles arranged in dazzling geometric patterns. A prestigious annual wine auction takes place here each November, with proceeds going to the Hospices. Of course you can't visit Burgundy without sampling its amazing wines, so we visit the cellars of a leading traditional winemaker for a tour and tasting before returning to the ship for lunch. (B,L,D)

Your cruise price includes

- 7 visits and tours, including guided tours of Lyon, Arles, Avignon, Vienne and Popes' Palace; a visit to Beaune, and excursions to the Ardèche Gorges, and the Pont du Gard
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 8 regional airports or return Eurostar / TGV from London St Pancras International*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

DAY 4 – Vienne and Tournon

Overnight the ship has cruised almost imperceptibly downstream and we enjoy breakfast in Vienne before our guided tour. Strikingly located in a narrow section of the Rhône where the river meanders dramatically around a steep bluff, Vienne is a treasure trove of historic remains, including the stunning Roman Temple of Augustus and Livia, one of only two edifices of this type in the whole of the country. From the ship, a little train will take you to the top of the city, the Mont Pipet hill, where the view onto the Rhône will inspire keen photographers. It's also where the Romans chose to build the spectacular amphitheatre in the 1st Century AD, which could accommodate 13,500 spectators. As the train weaves through the charming, narrow streets of the old town, soak up the history of this fascinating place.

We wander back to the ship for another superb lunch, during which we enter perhaps the most picturesque section of the Rhône as the river squeezes and twists past Condrieu, Saint-Rambert-d'Albon and Saint-Vallier, with wooded cliffs rising high on both sides. Traditionally these stretches were the most dangerous due to fierce currents and varying water levels but, with the waters now tamed by a series of locks whose complex mechanisms never cease to fascinate, this afternoon can be spent relaxing on the Sun Deck taking in the exceptional views. Later we moor in the pretty provincial town of Tournon, with its imposing castle and tree-lined avenues on one side of the river, while on the

other are the steep vine-covered hillsides of Hermitage, where another of the world's most revered wines is produced – a fitting view as we enjoy another exquisite dinner.

DAY 5 – Ardèche Gorges

This morning we cruise effortlessly downstream. In the distance you'll catch glimpses of the Alps and, as we approach Valence, the landscape gradually becomes less green with more ochres and magentas, the houses have sloping terracotta roofs typical of the Mediterranean and the air carries heady aromas of pine and cypress. You can only be in the Midi or – as we call it – the south of France.

After lunch we explore the Ardèche Gorges, whose scale is a fitting reminder of Mother Nature's awesome power. Sheer limestone cliffs plunge almost 1,000 feet to the river's blue waters, which elegantly snake their way through stupendous rock formations, culminating in a huge natural arch, the Pont d'Arc. Caves, grottoes and natural sculptures create marvellous views at every turn before we return to the gentler slopes of the Rhône Valley, where our ship is moored in charming Viviers, a medieval town clustered around its 12th-century cathedral. We continue through the famous lock at Bollène as you relax over dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Arles and Pont du Gard

You awake under the azure skies of deepest Provence and amid the warm stone colours of Arles, many of whose historic monuments are UNESCO World Heritage Sites. Our guided tour will help you appreciate the finer

points of Arles's magnificent Roman remains, including the splendid amphitheatre, one of the best preserved in the world, the earlier theatre built during the reign of Augustus and the Alyscamps, the ancient necropolis with its extraordinary atmosphere. The disturbed but great genius of an artist Van Gogh lived in Arles for just over a year, from February 1888. It was his most prolific period and, inspired by Arles and the light and beauty of the Provençal countryside, he produced around 300 works, including *The Night Café*, *The Sower* and, of course, *Sunflowers*.

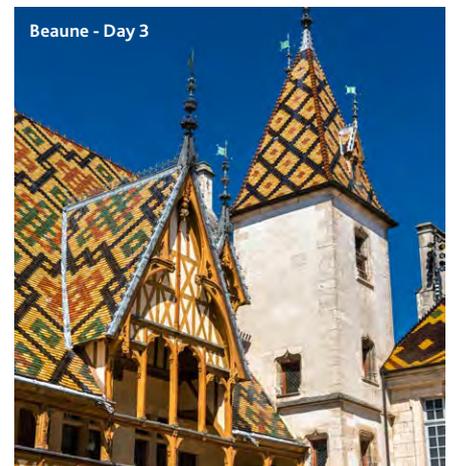
After lunch we visit Pont du Gard Roman aqueduct, one of the wonders of the ancient world. No amount of fame can diminish the first sight of this 2,000-year-old structure, which was the highest bridge built in the Empire – the Romans themselves considered it the most important testimony to their greatness. Rejoining the ship, we cruise along the Rhône and, during dinner, pass the imposing 15th-century castle at Tarascon standing guard on the river bank. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Avignon

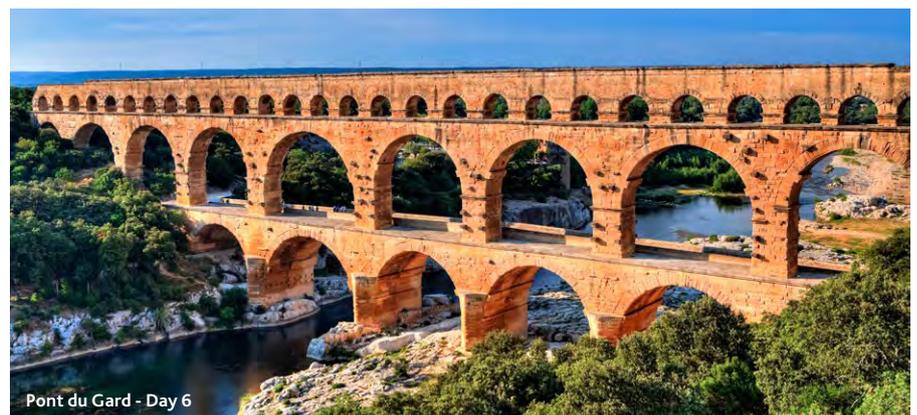
The light catching the red roofs of Avignon's majestic skyline is a sight to behold over breakfast, after which we embark on a guided tour of one of the most extraordinary and intriguing cities in France. Avignon's destiny changed during the 14th-century, when the Pope's court moved here to avoid strife in Rome. Igniting a century of prosperity, the Pontiff commissioned a host of ambitious building projects, and today the city is immaculately preserved, nestling behind



Ardèche Gorges - Day 5



Beaune - Day 3



Pont du Gard - Day 6



Lavender fields in Provence

its almost-intact 14th-century walls and boasting more remarkable monuments, superbly decorated buildings, churches, chapels and convents than you can possibly count. But to truly embrace the feel of papal Avignon, imagine yourself here during the Middle Ages amid the Palace's rich furnishings and extravagant decoration, with cardinals, princes and ambassadors milling about its candle-lit halls and corridors, while in the streets below countless pilgrims eagerly anticipate benediction. This was Avignon's brief golden age, when it was truly the centre of Christendom.

After lunch you're free to explore as you wish, perhaps visiting the nearby Petit Palais, the former home of the archbishops of Avignon, to cast a critical eye over the remarkable collection of over 300 paintings and sculptures from the Middle Ages and Renaissance, including works by Botticelli and Carpaccio. This evening we enjoy the sumptuous Captain's Dinner, with the chef serving specialities of the regions you've visited during your voyage of discovery. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

My view

Insider knowledge

Enjoy glorious views of Avignon and the famous bridge from the Jardin du Rocher des Doms. This public garden also has its own tiny vineyard and a bar where you can enjoy a glass of Côtes du Rhône.

Listen

Vincent written by Don McLean is a tribute to the artist Vincent Van Gogh. The song is also known by the opening line *Starry, starry night*, a reference to Van Gogh's 1889 painting.

Taste

Almonds, honey, lavender and candied orange peel are combined to make the irresistible soft nougat of Southern Provence.

Eden

Cruise Director



Uncover Porto's many fascinating gems - Day 2

Douro, Porto & Salamanca

8 DAYS
from only **£1,799**

November 2021

Explore what is possibly Europe's most undiscovered river through the stunning Douro Valley, dotted with charming villages, age-old traditions and wonderful wines. Immerse yourself in the local culture with a traditional flamenco performance and dinner at an authentic 'quinta'.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Porto

Fly to Lisbon or Porto and transfer to your cruise ship.

DAY 2 – Pinhão

Morning cruising. Included afternoon visit to a quinta.

DAY 3 – Castelo Rodrigo

Morning cruising. Included afternoon guided excursion to Castelo Rodrigo.

DAY 4 – Salamanca

Drive to Salamanca for an included guided tour. Enjoy a flamenco show over lunch. A free afternoon to explore Salamanca.

DAY 5 – Mateus Palace Gardens

Morning cruising to Peso da Régua. Included afternoon guided excursion to Mateus Palace Gardens. Evening dinner at Quinta da Pacheca.

DAY 6 – Lamego

Drive to Lamego to visit the Sanctuary of our Lady of Remedies with free time to explore. This evening enjoy the Captain's Dinner and a folklore show.

DAY 7 – Porto

Morning cruising. Included visit to a local port producer with tasting and afternoon guided tour of Porto with free time to explore.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return journey.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Porto

Fly to Lisbon or Porto, where we'll meet and transfer you to your five-star cruise ship in Porto. From the moment you board, the welcoming crew are at your service. In no time you'll be settled into your luxurious, thoughtfully furnished accommodation and familiarising yourself with all the first-class aspects of this floating boutique hotel. (D)

DAY 2 – Pinhão

As dawn breaks over Porto the adventure begins as our elegant vessel commences her stately passage upstream. Your first delicious breakfast is served by the attentive crew and whilst you linger over another coffee, you can really start to unwind as we leave the city skyline far behind. Head up on deck to appreciate the changing landscape in all its splendour as the river weaves its way between the lush hillsides; from the first morning on board, it's very apparent that the Douro is one of Europe's most photogenic river valleys and the topography has prevented the building of extensive riverside roads.

Thoughts turn to lunch, so reconvene with your fellow travellers in the elegant restaurant – its lovely panoramic windows ensure you won't miss any of the spectacular views gliding by before we arrive later in the pretty little town of Pinhão. We enjoy a visit to a local historic quinta to learn all about the stages of wine production, from the planting of the vines, harvesting, the wine-making process and finally tasting and labelling. No visit would be complete without sampling some of their excellent produce of course, so we enjoy a tasting before returning to the ship.

Tonight, as you enter the restaurant for the Welcome Dinner, feel free to choose your table. Later we will see a celebratory vintage port wine opened in the traditional way. We are moored in Pinhão overnight. (B, L, D)

DAY 3 – Castelo Rodrigo

Relax over a leisurely breakfast whilst the ever-changing scenery idly slips by through the restaurant's superb panoramic windows. The Douro was once a wild river, notoriously challenging to navigate. Today it has been tamed by a system of dams and locks, which have raised the water level to produce a topography reminiscent of Scotland's lochs that enhances the valley's charm. As we cruise into ever more rural territory towards the Spanish border, the river here is at its most peaceful. It's the perfect time to take a refreshing dip in the Sun Deck pool or perhaps enjoy a cool pre-lunch glass of vinho verde, the local, gently fizzy white wine. Portuguese wine is simply outstanding but production is low, so the best is rarely exported.

This afternoon we visit Castelo Rodrigo, a delightful 12th-century walled village tucked away in the picturesque highland ranges bordering Spain. Its church was a resting place on the pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela and it is said that Saint Francis



himself stayed here. The views are simply stupendous, stretching across almost-deserted ochre hillsides. This evening after dinner head up on to the sun deck to listen to the unmistakable sound of crickets and breathe in the scents from the surrounding valley slopes. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Salamanca

Today we visit historic Salamanca, one of the many UNESCO World Heritage Sites on this journey, regarded by many Spaniards as their nation's most beautiful city. Founded by the Romans, who erected its 389-yard-long



Your cruise price includes

- 8 guided visits and tours including a full-day excursion to Salamanca with a walking tour; lunch and a flamenco show; a guided tour of Porto with a wine-tasting; dinner at a typical Portuguese quinta; and visits to Castelo Rodrigo, Mateus Palace gardens and Lamego
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Traditional Portuguese folk music show
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 6 regional airports*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

bridge, Salamanca is mostly built from local sandstone that emanates a gorgeous rose-coloured glow in the sunlight. Perched on a hill on a bend in the serene River Tormes, the city is a picture of tranquillity but its history is turbulent, having been successively fought over by Hannibal, the Moors, then the Duke of Wellington and Napoleon.

Salamanca is dominated by its two cathedrals and its university. Founded in 1218, the university is the oldest in Spain and was one of the civilised world's most important seats of study for over 400 years. The Spanish Inquisition's records are still kept here, and as early as the 16th century it boasted some 12,000 students. Seeing its immaculately preserved lecture halls with their vaulted ceilings, it's easy to conjure an image of Christopher Columbus addressing the learned men of the day or legal experts constructing the international laws that originate here. We enjoy a guided tour of the city seeing the main sights. Over lunch you enjoy a traditional flamenco show, then you are free to explore Salamanca as you wish. You may choose to linger, admiring the ornate interiors of its cathedrals – the more recent dates from the 16th-century – or explore its tiny streets, medieval squares, traditional shops, gardens and marketplaces. The main square, the Plaza Mayor, was built in the 18th-century in Spanish Baroque style with colonnaded walkways all around at ground level, ideal for finding a shaded spot to sit and watch the locals pass by. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Mateus Palace Gardens

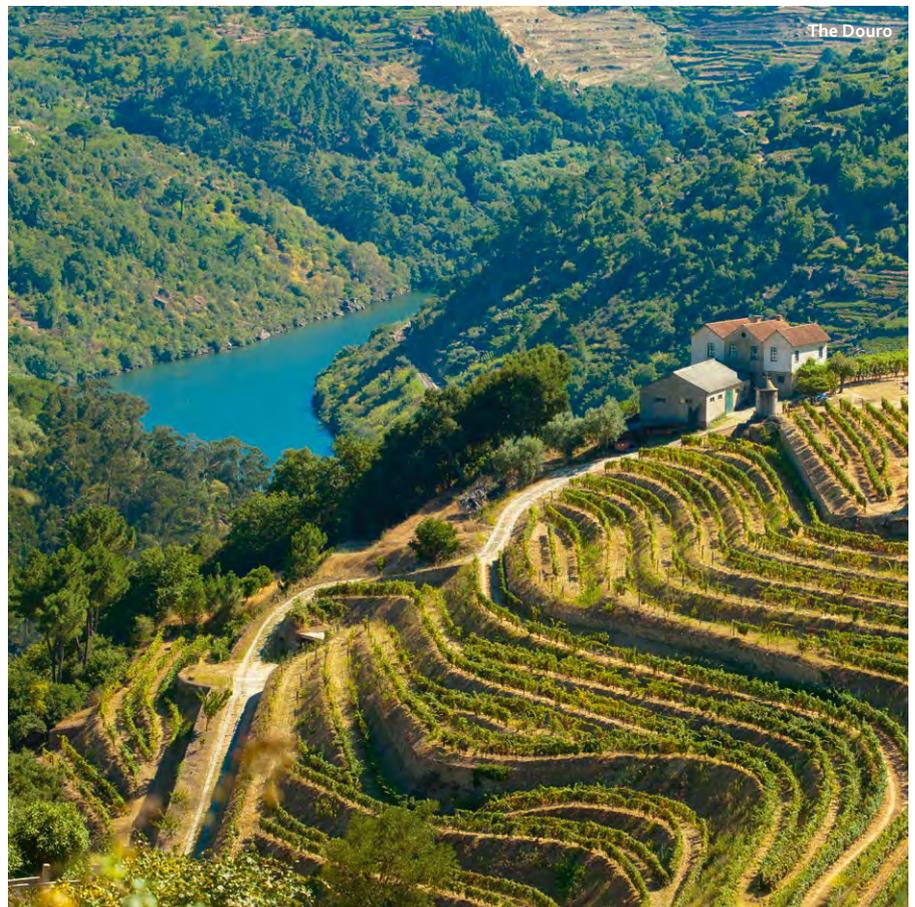
One of the benefits of life aboard a river cruise is the sheer sense of relaxation it brings; our elegant ship slips its moorings during breakfast, after which there is plenty of time for a spot of pampering in the on-board spa, or simply watch the seamless changing of the riverbank scenery passing by from the comfort of a cosy seat in the lounge. We're in port wine territory, where the lush hillsides have largely given way to a patterned landscape of terraced vineyards. Inland from the Atlantic, the climate has changed, too; it's noticeably warmer and drier, while the area has a Mediterranean appearance with orangey, earthy colours replacing verdant greens. After another superb lunch on board, we cruise into the small town of Peso da Régua, from where we visit the grounds of the splendid Mateus Palace. Anyone familiar with Mateus Rosé and its characteristic 'squashed' bottle will recognise the palace from the label. Whatever your opinion of the wine, it is an impressive 18th-century Baroque edifice, mirrored in its stunning pond, surrounded by landscaped French gardens. This evening we take the short drive to the 126-acre Quinta da Pacheca for dinner. Enjoying dramatic views over the Douro, it dates back to the 18th-century and is simply one of the most beautiful and distinguished properties in the region. It is also notable as being the first quinta – in 1738 – to bottle wine under the name of its owner, the aristocrat Mariana Pacheco Pereira. You have time to wander through part of the estate before sampling a selection of its finest wines at dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Lamego

This morning after breakfast we take a short drive to historic Lamego, home of Portugal's sparkling wine, Raposeira, and one of the first places to be reclaimed from the Moors in the 12th century. Situated atop the hill overlooking this lovely town is the ancient Sanctuary of Our Lady of Remedies church, its stairways adorned with attractive azulejos, the country's characteristic painted ceramic tiles. By the time we return to our ship, our chef and his team will be adding the finishing touches to another delicious lunch, ready to be served as we depart for Entre-os-Rios. After lunch there's the perfect opportunity to enjoy the kaleidoscope of Douro views – or perhaps a spot of reading in the lounge over a cup of tea. This evening is the Captain's Dinner, a truly memorable experience featuring exquisite regional specialities, followed by a colourful performance of traditional Portuguese folk music by a local cultural group. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Porto

There's a perfect opportunity to avail yourself of some of the ship's range of five-star facilities this morning – maybe a little gentle exercise in the fitness room before heading up to the sun deck to enjoy a coffee whilst chatting with newly-made friends as our ship makes a graceful arrival in Porto once more, passing under the city's spectacular bridges. Porto is of course synonymous with wonderful port wine and all the famous port producers are here, such as Calem, Sandeman and Ferreira, so a visit here would not be complete without a tour of one of them. You'll learn about this





fortified wine's fascinating history and its close British connections. Port is made from grapes still pressed in the traditional way – by feet – then lovingly matured, sometimes for decades, before you can enjoy its subtle flavours. Of course, you'll get the chance to sample various port styles at the end of our visit.

After lunch on board we enjoy a guided tour of Porto. Strategically overlooking the Douro as it empties into the Atlantic, Portugal's second largest city was originally a Roman town, but its wealth derived from its knowledge of the sea routes to India, with fortunes made from trading spices, silks and other fine goods. Our tour unveils some of its major and more surprising sights. You'll experience the tangled lanes of the old town and wander the sloping maze of winding, cobbled alleyways, soaking up the atmosphere whilst stopping to admire the lovely architecture, soaring bell towers, fine baroque churches, golden rooftops and beautiful tiles of this slice of traditional Portugal. Stop for a drink in a cosy café and be tempted by an array of the most delicious cakes you'll ever taste.

You'll have the rest of the afternoon to explore the truly fascinating city; so perhaps return to the lounge to chat into the evening and reflect on the splendours of the remarkable River Douro – over a glass of port, of course. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant, take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £89 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

Extend your holiday

Add four days to your trip, staying in Lisbon, Portugal's elegant and eccentric capital city, seeing its many wonderful highlights. See the next page for details.

My view



Insider knowledge

São Bento in Porto is one of the world's most beautiful railway stations. The magnificent azulejo tiles in the entrance hall recount the city's fascinating history.

Watch

Starring Forest Whitaker and Dennis Quaid the 2008 political thriller *Vantage Point*, was shot on location in Salamanca.

Taste

The Douro Valley is known for world-class Port wine and red wine but the elegant white wines are equally good and the perfect companion to a plate of grilled sardines or a creamy, local cheese.

Lale
Cruise Director



Heidelberg - Day 4

Rhine, Strasbourg & Heidelberg

8 DAYS
from only **£1,499**

November 2021

Meander between picture-postcard towns and cities along the Rhine. From delightful Boppard, through the impressive Rhine Gorge to Germany's wine capital, Mainz, and onward to sophisticated Heidelberg and medieval Strasbourg.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cologne

Fly to Düsseldorf or Cologne or take the Eurostar to Brussels and transfer to your cruise ship. Overnight sailing.

DAY 2 – Koblenz & Boppard

Included morning guided tour of Koblenz. Afternoon sailing to Boppard for an included tour.

DAY 3 – Rhine Gorge & Mainz

Cruise through the Rhine Gorge. Included afternoon guided tour of Mainz. Overnight sailing.

DAY 4 – Heidelberg

Included guided tour of Heidelberg with a free afternoon to explore. Evening and overnight sailing.

DAY 5 – Strasbourg and Colmar

Included guided tour of Strasbourg. Drive to visit Colmar. Overnight sailing.

DAY 6 – Rudesheim

Morning sailing. Included afternoon guided tour of Rudesheim.

DAY 7 – Cologne

Morning sailing to Cologne. Included afternoon guided tour of Cologne with free time to explore.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return journey.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cologne

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Düsseldorf or Cologne, or take the Eurostar to Brussels from London St Pancras International. On arrival, transfer by coach to your five-star cruise ship moored in picturesque Cologne. The dedicated English-speaking crew welcomes you on board and helps you to your cabin. After settling into your spacious and tastefully furnished accommodation, there's time to familiarise yourself with this splendid ship. (D)

DAY 2 – Koblenz & Boppard

When you peek out from your cabin this morning, you'll realise the ship has slipped quietly away from Cologne; the view that greets you is of vine-covered valleys, sides aglow in the morning light, bidding you a warm welcome to the charms of the Rhine. There's nothing quite like that feeling of anticipation when gliding alongside the promenade of a river port, snatching tantalising glimpses of what lies ashore, and Koblenz – beautifully located at the confluence of the Rhine and Moselle Rivers – doesn't disappoint. The city is immersed in two millennia of history: founded by the Romans, it was successively occupied by the Franks, chosen as a residence of the German prince electors, conquered by the French and fortified by the Prussians! All have left their marks in the city's rich array of castles, churches and historic buildings. Koblenz is a romantic's dream – forest-covered hillsides dominate the skyline, while the lower slopes are strewn with pretty, half-timbered buildings so typical of the Rhineland. After a satisfying breakfast, we disembark to enjoy an insightful guided tour through 'Old Koblenz', a patchwork of narrow streets and squares, many lined with exquisitely restored traditional houses and cosy cafés.

There's time to explore on your own, maybe taking in a little shopping, before ambling back to the cruise ship. We continue upstream as we enjoy our first relaxing lunch on board and before long we arrive in Boppard, a gorgeous town on a dramatic, almost U-shaped river bend. Known as the 'Pearl of the Rhine', Boppard is renowned for its storybook medieval atmosphere of cobbled streets and ancient houses. Here we'll enjoy a guided tour lead by one of our local experts, with highlights including the beautiful white stone St. Severus and Carmelite churches, the marketplace with the ruins of the fortress and the old town with its charming winding alleys and half-timbered houses. The early evening is an ideal time to wander along the town's attractive riverside Rheinallee promenade before thoughts turn to tonight's menu, prepared by the ship's chef and served to your delight in the restaurant. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Rhine Gorge & Mainz

Slipping our mooring in Boppard we cruise through the Rhine Gorge, where the waters narrow to one-fifth their normal width and



flow more swiftly. Sheer valley walls soar 600 feet and magnificent birds of prey glide above. Teutonic knights built the numerous redoubtable castles as symbols of their power and to extract tolls from ships, but the fortresses now stand as silent ruins on forested hillsides as reminders of how fortunes change with the passage of history. This really is the magical Rhine of our imagination, so

find a comfortable spot on the Sun Deck or in the forward observation lounge and enjoy the experience of cruising this famous stretch of water.

Your next port of call is historic Mainz for an unmissable guided tour. The city is renowned today as Germany's wine capital but whose most famous son was Johannes

Your cruise price includes

- 7 guided tours including Strasbourg, Heidelberg, Cologne, Rüdesheim, Koblenz and Colmar
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 5 regional airports or seat on Eurostar from London St Pancras International with regional rail connections available*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

Gutenberg, inventor of the movable type printing press. The excellent city museum houses a reconstruction of his workshop and, outstandingly, two original 1455 Gutenberg Bibles. The museum is in a beautifully restored 17th-century building in the heart of Mainz's Old Town, opposite the impressive Romanesque cathedral. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Heidelberg

Overnight we cruise further downstream and, after breakfast, we take a short drive to Heidelberg, undoubtedly one of Germany's most perfect architectural treasures and all the more remarkable because it escaped bombing during the Second World War. Set in an almost idealised German landscape, this jewel sits on the banks of the River Neckar, surrounded by forests and with an imposing castle dominating the church spires and terracotta gabled roofs of the compact Altstadt – the romantic old town. Its 14th-century university, one of the most prestigious in Europe, lends Heidelberg a genteel atmosphere rather similar to its 'twin' town – Cambridge. During the 19th century it was the centre of Germany's Romantic Movement, on the route of the 'Grand Tour' and visited by many artists including JMW Turner, who captured its splendours for eternity. There are few more delightful places to explore, as you'll discover on our guided walking tour, which reveals its principal attractions – including the magical stone bridge with its twin white towers – and local secrets. Afterwards, you'll have time to explore on your own before returning to the ship to enjoy the gorgeous views as the sun sets. (B,L,D)



DAY 5 – Strasbourg and Colmar

By breakfast we've arrived in charming Strasbourg, capital of the French Alsace region. The city is a delight – its centre a mosaic of winding alleys and lanes lined with quirkily crooked, half-timbered houses largely unchanged since the 14th-century. During its history Strasbourg has been both German and French, and you see influences of both in its language, cuisine and appearance, creating a truly individual ambience. This morning, we experience a walking tour with a local guide leading us to its enchanting centre – a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We take in the Petite France quarter of pretty canals lined with classic pastel-coloured houses crisscrossed with timbers and lower-filled window boxes, the famous multi-towered Ponts Couverts, or covered bridges, and, of course, the stunning Gothic Notre-Dame Cathedral, which Victor Hugo memorably described as a 'veritable tiara of stone'. Just south of Strasbourg lies a picturesque wine route, virtually an open-air museum of medieval villages, cobbled streets and Renaissance chateaux strung like pearls on a necklace against a sweeping backdrop of rolling hills. We enjoy all this on a splendidly scenic drive, soon arriving in the medieval town of Colmar, the best-preserved in Alsace. Little known outside the area, it's a magical concoction of canals, former merchants' houses, ancient religious buildings and antique shops. The cathedral quarter is surrounded by pastel-coloured half-timbered houses displaying the intricate wrought-iron hanging signs so typical of this area of Europe. We return to the ship in Strasbourg for dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Rudesheim

After a relaxing morning cruise, we arrive in Rudesheim for a wonderful walking tour – if you imagine a typical Rhine town, then this would be it! Narrow crooked streets lead down to the sweeping river with a backdrop of wooded and vine-covered slopes. Riesling is the speciality grape here and Rudesheim has many atmospheric Weinstuben where you can sample local wines produced from the surrounding vineyards. On board tonight, we enjoy a culinary spectacular – the Captain's Dinner – featuring a range of irresistible specialities from the countries and regions we visit during our cruise. This special occasion is hosted, of course, by the Captain himself. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Cologne

This morning, early risers can enjoy phenomenal views as once again we pass through the Rhine Gorge where, in Wagner's Ring Cycle, the Rhine Maidens guard lost treasure, the 'Rheingold'. What better way to spend the morning than relaxing on the Sun Deck beneath dramatic rocky, vineyard-topped valley sides dotted with romantic ruined castles. The valley sides dissolve and hills give way to plains as we progress majestically to Cologne.

This afternoon you can discover this fascinating city on our tour led by a local guide who'll help you get the most out of your visit, which of course takes in the twin-spired cathedral, the largest Gothic church in Northern Europe, miraculous survivor of Second World War bombing and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It took six centuries to complete, and among its many treasures are

Assmannshausen,
near Rudesheim - Day 6





the magnificent stained glass windows and gilded sarcophagus said to contain the remains of the three kings from the Nativity story. We also see the vibrant old town, beautifully restored and boasting an abundance of excellent shopping and cosy bars, some of which still brew their own beer. As night falls, a sumptuous dinner provides the perfect finale to this memorable cruise through the romantic River Rhine. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant, take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

Personalise your holiday

Siegfried's Mechanical Music Cabinet
Embark on a fantastical adventure into the world of automatic musical instruments. See the impressive collection of fascinating musical instruments that function like computers, ranging from tiny, delicate music boxes to an enormous orchestrion. From €6.50 per person.

My view

Insider knowledge

Frederic Bartholdi, sculptor of the Statue of Liberty, was born in Colmar. Five of his models of the statue and a scale replica are on show at the Musée Bartholdi.

Read

A Tramp Abroad by Mark Twain includes many chapters depicting Heidelberg and its surroundings. Twain enjoyed observing student life and was known to sit in on lectures at the university.

Taste

Flammekueche is the pizza of Alsace. This savory tart, garnished with a blend of cream, cheese, bacon and onions partners perfectly with a fine Alsatian beer or a glass of Gewürztraminer.

Eric
Cruise Director



Amsterdam, Kinderdijk & the Dutch Bulbfields

5 DAYS
from only **£949**

April 2021

Experience historic maritime cities, where innovation meets the traditions of the past. Be inspired by iconic windmills lining the canal banks and the floral masterpiece that is Keukenhof Tulip Gardens.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Amsterdam

Fly to Amsterdam or take the Eurostar to Brussels and then the Thalys train to Amsterdam. Overnight sailing to Enkhuizen.

DAY 2 – Enkhuizen

Included entry to Zuiderzee museum. Afternoon and overnight sailing along the Markermeer.

DAY 3 – Rotterdam & Kinderdijk

Included morning guided tour of Rotterdam. Included afternoon guided tour of Kinderdijk windmills. Evening sailing to Amsterdam.

DAY 4 – Keukenhof & Amsterdam

Morning drive through the bulbfields to Keukenhof Gardens. Included afternoon guided tour of Amsterdam in a canal cruiser.

DAY 5 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return journey.



Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Amsterdam

Fly to Amsterdam from a choice of regional airports or take the Eurostar from London St Pancras International to Brussels, where you change trains and continue to Amsterdam. On arrival, transfer by coach to your five-star cruise ship. The friendly crew welcomes you on board, helping you settle into your spacious and exquisitely furnished accommodation – you'll feel immediately at home. (D)

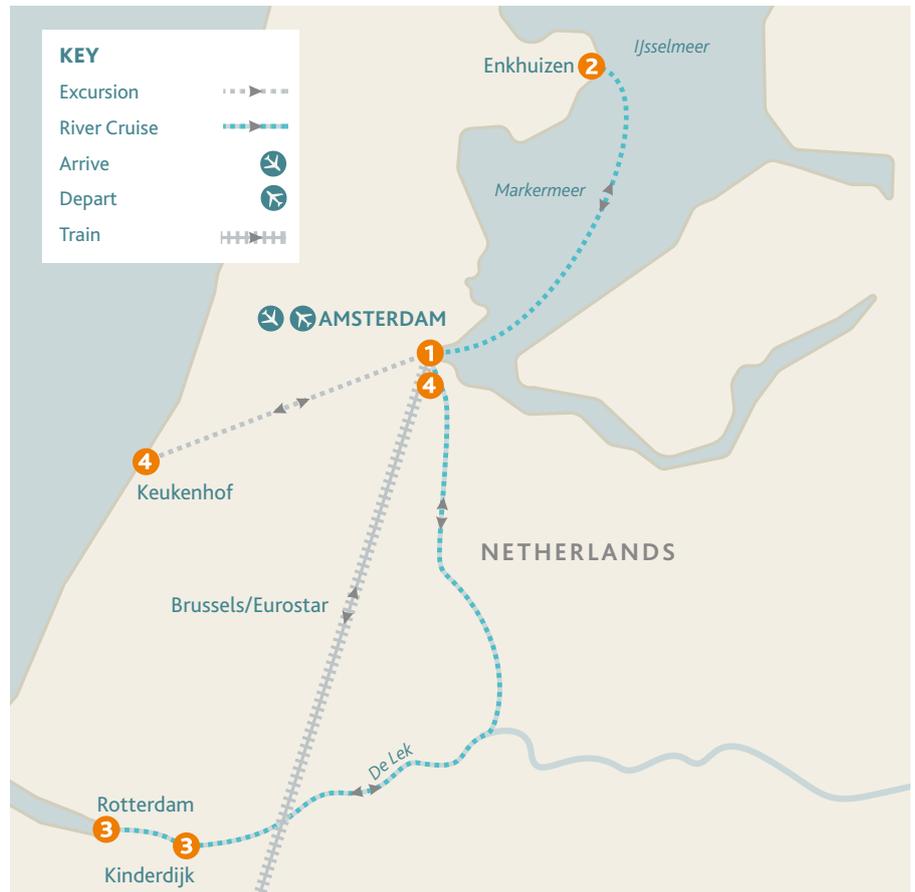
DAY 2 – Enkhuizen

Overnight the ship has gently steered a course north. As dawn breaks, you're greeted by views of Enkhuizen, a picturesque port nestling at the edge of the former Zuiderzee. It is also home to the Zuiderzee Museum, which we will experience on our visit this morning. Found in the historic centre of Enkhuizen, it superbly recreates the 19th-century heritage of Holland's inland bay and combines interesting exhibits with demonstrations of the artisan skills of yesteryear, such as sailmaking, fish curing and blacksmithing. The open air museum is particularly captivating, as the era is brought to life with a charming village atmosphere, where the likes of bakers, shopkeepers and smokehouse workers don traditional clothing and serve you their wares, just as they would have done all those years ago.

During the Dutch Golden Age of the 17th-century, the Netherlands dominated world maritime trade, becoming fabulously prosperous. Enkhuizen, as one of the country's principal ports specialising in trade in the East Indies, flourished. Merchants keen to display their wealth created this town of gabled houses, narrow streets, bridges and waterways. It's also a haven for history lovers, with numerous beautifully preserved buildings and city gates, dating back to the 1500s. In particular, look out for the grand Drommedaris gate, which has been restored since its destruction in World War II, and the ornate Waag building, built in an early Renaissance style in 1559.

It's a delight to explore, taking in the atmosphere of its little streets and jumble of sailing boats in the harbour.

After a delicious lunch on board, we cruise along the Markermeer, the southwestern part of the IJsselmeer, the great freshwater lake created when the Zuiderzee was separated from the North Sea by a series of dams and dykes built during the 1920s and '30s. This mammoth engineering achievement now protects low-lying areas from flooding and has allowed the reclamation of 626 square miles of fertile land. Before long, thoughts turn to tonight's à la carte dinner, served with panache by the restaurant staff, after which why not unwind with a digestif at the bar to the soothing sound of the ship's pianist. (B,L,D)



DAY 3 – Rotterdam & Kinderdijk

Wake up in historic Rotterdam, the Netherlands' second largest metropolis, situated where the Rhine flows into the North Sea. This morning we embark on a guided tour of this captivating city, from the old harbour to the modern architecture, passing by the Witte Huis, Europe's first sky scraper, built in the Art Nouveau style.

Known as the 'Gateway to Europe', it is the largest European cargo port and has been a conduit for trade since the 14th century.

Unsurprisingly, its logistical significance made it a target for bombing during the Second World War and its old town was destroyed, with only the Church of Saint Lawrence left standing. During the following decades Rotterdam was reconstructed with typical Dutch optimism and engineering expertise and now boasts an abundance of innovative and imaginative architecture.

Other highlights of Rotterdam include Europe's largest swing bridge, the Erasmus Bridge, arched Markthal (market hall) and

Your cruise price includes

- 5 visits and tours including a guided tour of Rotterdam, visits to Keukenhof Gardens, Enkhuizen and Kinderdijk, and a canal cruise in Amsterdam
- 4 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 4 regional airports or seats on Eurostar / Thalys from London St Pancras International*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

Cube Houses. The Erasmus Bridge is a cable-stayed and bascule construction in the heart of Rotterdam, which is aptly dubbed 'the Swan' because of its striking structure. Whilst the vibrant yellow Cube Houses, known locally as Kubuswoningen, are another architectural masterpiece. Built on stilts and tilted at bizarre angles, they were designed by Dutch architect Piet Blom in the 1970s and remain an iconic part of the city to this day.

There are also excellent museums, such as the vast Boijmans Van Beuningen, which houses a world-class collection of works by old and modern masters, from Rembrandt to Van Gogh to Dalí, and some rare and beautiful glassware.

During lunch on board you can enjoy a kaleidoscope of views through the restaurant's panoramic windows as we leave Rotterdam's skyline behind. A significant part of the Netherlands lies up to 22 feet below sea level, but an intricate network of dykes and polders, the Netherlands' unique drainage systems, has kept the seawater at bay and allowed land reclamation.

At the very heart of this fascinating reclaimed region is Kinderdijk, our next port of call. Here, you can witness a truly iconic polder scene – a

series of 19 authentic windmills lining the canal banks, set against a starkly beautiful backdrop of pancake-flat marshland. Windmills are symbolic of Dutch history and the never-ending battle with the sea, and visiting these beautifully preserved structures is like stepping back in time. So impressive in fact, that the windmills have held UNESCO World Heritage status for over 20 years. Later we return to the cruise ship, where the chef has prepared a sumptuous dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Keukenhof & Amsterdam

A long spring season and the polders' well-drained soil create the perfect environment for growing the Netherlands' world-famous tulips, first imported into the country from the Ottoman Empire in the late 16th-century. This morning we drive through the scenic bulb fields to Keukenhof, the world's largest flower garden, covering nearly 80 acres. Nothing prepares you for the dazzling carpet of colours created by the seven million tulips, hyacinths, daffodils and other blooms arranged in rows, swirls and every other imaginable shape. The art of flower planting reaches breathtaking heights in Keukenhof's themed areas, and wandering among this dramatic pageant of hues set in a

landscape of lakes, trees, pavilions and water features is magical – and provides gardeners with a wealth of inspiration to take home!

We return to Amsterdam to explore this beautiful city on a classic glass-topped canal cruiser. A network of 165 canals built in rings during the 17th-century defines life in its centre, and our 'water's-eye view' is the best way to absorb Amsterdam's history. Relax and watch this unique cityscape unfold as our guide explains the many intriguing aspects of life here. You'll see moored houseboats, quirky bridges, cobbled streets lined with tall, narrow merchants' houses, gabled civic buildings and homes of famous former residents such as Rembrandt, the greatest Dutch Golden Age artist, and Anne Frank, whose diaries tell a poignant tale of life under the Nazis.

Amsterdam is the ideal walking city and we remain moored dockside so you can explore its characterful streets at your leisure. Exceptional art is always close by, from small galleries to the world-class Rijksmuseum and the Van Gogh Museum, both holding huge collections. You might choose to discover the interior of Anne Frank's house, rummage through the Waterlooplein flea market or relax at a café



Enkhuizen - Day 2



Amsterdam - Day 4



Rotterdam - Day 3



Amsterdam - Day 4

Kinderdijk – Day 3



sipping a rich Dutch coffee and watching the locals trundle over cobbles along the canals on their high-handlebar bicycles. Why not take a stroll to the picturesque Westerpark, where the vibrant Westergas, once a group of 19th-century industrial buildings, is home to a host of independent coffee roasters, a microbrewery and an art house.

You could even try a traditional Dutch snack from a street market vendor whilst you watch the locals pass by. Sample the likes of bitterballen (deep fried meatballs served with mustard), poffertjes (mini pancakes dusted with sugar) or the local Dutch liquorice, which might be saltier than you're used to. If you see a haringhandels (herring stands) they'll be serving traditional raw herring, a pickled speciality often accompanied by diced onions and gherkins. Remember to save room for this evening though, where a delicious dining experience awaits. Wrapping up a memorable day is the lavish Captain's Dinner in the ship's restaurant, as evening falls and the lights of this unforgettable city sparkle in the night. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £59 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

My view

Insider knowledge

A stroll along the grand 17th century canals of Amsterdam is a must but the smaller canals are equally rewarding. Brouwersgracht is particularly lovely in the evening when the illuminated gabled houses look like strings of lanterns.

Read

The Tulip: by Anna Pavord recounts the riveting history of the tulip bulb and how it became a worldwide phenomenon.

Taste

The stroopwafel is a wafer made from two thin layers of baked dough filled with a caramel syrup. This sweet treat is a Dutch favourite.



Mike
Cruise Director



Honfleur - Day 5

The Seine, Paris & Normandy

8 DAYS
from only **£1,829**

March 2021

Catch the remarkable sights that line the majestic Seine and reflect on historical events that shaped the world today, with visits to iconic Paris, the incredibly preserved Bayeux Tapestry and Gold Beach, along the poignant Normandy coastline.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Paris

Fly or take the Eurostar to Paris and transfer to your cruise ship. Overnight sailing.

DAY 2 – Les Andelys

Morning sailing. Shuttle to Chateau Gaillard with entrance fee included. Evening sailing.

DAY 3 – Rouen

Included morning guided tour of Rouen. Free time this evening in Caudebec.

DAY 4 – Bayeux and Arromanches

Included full day tour to Bayeux and Arromanches.

DAY 5 – Honfleur

Included morning visit to Honfleur. Afternoon and evening cruising to Vernon.

DAY 6 – Giverny & Vernon

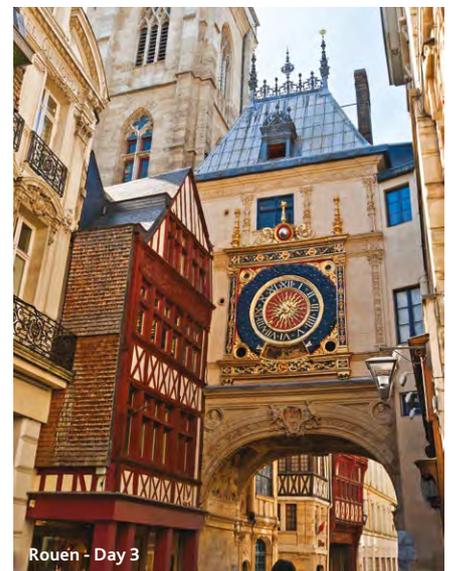
Included morning visit to Monet's Garden. Evening and overnight sailing.

DAY 7 – Paris

Included morning guided tour of Paris with free time to explore.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return journey.



Rouen - Day 3

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Paris

Take the Eurostar from London St Pancras International to Paris or fly to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport. On arrival, transfer by coach to your cruise ship moored on the River Seine in the heart of the city. The friendly crew will welcome you on board, helping you settle into your spacious and exquisitely furnished accommodation – you'll immediately feel at home. This evening you enjoy your first sumptuous dinner, served in the ship's restaurant. (D)

DAY 2 – Les Andelys

During the night our ship slips her mooring and, as you enjoy breakfast, the landscape passes by serenely and you quickly get used to this luxurious sightseeing experience. Rounding a sweeping bend so typical of the Seine, we reach the town of Mantes-la-Jolie with its imposing church – so large and architecturally impressive it could be a cathedral – while straight ahead is a medieval stone bridge. The central section of the bridge was destroyed during the Second World War and never repaired – it's the first of many poignant reminders that this region of France has been a battleground for centuries. Beyond Mantes we encounter another typical feature of the Seine as it flows seaward – picturesque chalk cliffs, almost resembling a giant's teeth. Beautiful villages like La Roche Guyon slide by, surrounded by bocage countryside of lush pastures and high hedgerows, countless cider orchards, half-timbered barns and ancient wooden farmhouses. We're truly in the heart of one of France's historic and stunningly attractive dukedoms – Normandy.

While you're enjoying your first delicious lunch, the captain has skillfully berthed at Les Andelys, a small town dominated by one of the most spectacular sights along the entire valley – Château Gaillard. This afternoon we discover the story behind this remarkable castle, with entrance fee included. The remarkable Château Gaillard guards the apex of the river bend and was built by Richard the Lionheart in the 12th-century to defend Rouen from the French. Besieged many times during the turbulent history of northern France, Château Gaillard is now one of the most dramatic ruins in the region. From this spectacular vantage point – probably the finest of the entire cruise – you enjoy stupendous views across the countryside.

During your second excellent dinner we slip our mooring unobtrusively, and what could be better than heading to the lounge for a digestif and a chance to discuss your impressions of the Seine with your like-minded companions? The evening cruise is delightful as we glide past more bucolic scenery, some of the finest France can offer. Should you wish, why not arrange to visit the wheelhouse, the Captain is always delighted to explain to those interested how the highly sophisticated navigation and safety systems operate. (B,L,D)



DAY 3 – Rouen

We awake in Rouen, Normandy's capital, one of Europe's finest medieval cities and scene of many momentous events over the centuries. Pride of place on our guided tour of the city belongs to its stunning Gothic cathedral, which was immortalised by the great Impressionist Claude Monet in a series of 28 paintings showing the facade at varying times of day and in different weather conditions.

Briefly becoming the world's tallest building when the soaring spire was added in the 19th-century, the cathedral is also notable for the recumbent statue reputedly containing the heart of Richard the Lionheart. Rouen's beautifully tangled alleyways are a revelation, lined with antique shops, tasteful boutiques and, of course, countless restaurants serving exceptional local cuisine emphasising the country's outstanding gastronomic heritage.



Your cruise price includes

- 9 visits and tours, including guided tours of Paris, Honfleur and Rouen; visits to Caudebec, Les Andelys and Vernon; and excursions to Claude Monet's house, the D-Day Normandy Beaches and the world-famous Bayeux Tapestry
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure (except one lunch), including welcome cocktails, welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 4 regional airports or Eurostar seat from London St Pancras International with regional rail connections available*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

The Place du Vieux-Marché is one of the city's most poignant spots; a large cross marks the point where the 'Maid of Orléans' Joan of Arc was burned at the stake for her beliefs.

During another superb lunch we cast off to navigate through yet more twists and turns, chalk cliffs and a landscape of forest-covered hills that are designated as areas of outstanding natural beauty and sanctuaries for diverse wildlife, including deer and wild boar. Another highlight of the valley soon greets us – the ethereal ruins of Jumièges Abbey. In the late afternoon we moor in Caudebec-en-Caux, with its typical market square, richly decorated church and the Maison des Templiers, one of the oldest houses in Normandy. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Bayeux and Arromanches

After breakfast you'll be ready for a full-day tour exploring two of the most important aspects of European history – the Bayeux Tapestry and the D-Day landings. (Please note lunch is not provided today.) Bayeux itself is a delightful town with a historic core that escaped the ravages of war, so you can marvel at its many splendid buildings including the grand Gothic cathedral. But, of course, Bayeux is most famous as the home of the tapestry telling the story of the Norman invasion of Britain in 1066 in glorious detail. Among its 75 scenes are the coronation of Harold following the death of Edward the Confessor and his subsequent demise at the Battle of Hastings, which led to William of Normandy invading England and becoming king. The 230-foot-long tapestry is made up of nine panels of extremely delicate embroidery – gazing at its wonderful depictions of the battle and the

period's architecture, weapons and everyday life, you'll appreciate why the Bayeux Tapestry is arguably the finest relic of the Middle Ages. This afternoon we drive to nearby Gold Beach, one of the five main landing sites on D-Day, when Allied forces surged into Normandy to begin the liberation of occupied Europe. Casting your eyes across the sand to the water's edge, it's sobering to consider that on 6 June 1944 around 25,000 British troops came ashore on this one beach, with 400 killed by the defenders. At the western end of the shoreline is the village of Arromanches, where there is a museum dedicated to the 'longest day' and you can still see remnants of the two Mulberry harbours constructed for the landing craft. After a day recalling such momentous events and the stories surrounding them, thoughts turn again to the culinary delights awaiting you in the refined comfort of the ship's restaurant. (B,D)

DAY 5 – Honfleur

Honfleur is often regarded as the most picturesque spot on the northern French coast, and after breakfast we make the short journey to this delightful town. Its old harbour, sheltering both fishing boats and luxurious pleasure craft, is beautifully preserved and surrounded by a perfect waterfront of pastel-coloured 16th- to 18th-century houses, many converted to seafood restaurants. Watch the talented artists capturing the captivating views along the waterfront, while the intricate maze of streets behind is also well worth discovering. Honfleur's most famous son is Eugene Boudin, one of the forerunners of Impressionism and a friend of Claude Monet, who also painted the harbour many times.

After returning to the ship for lunch, we slip our mooring and begin our passage back upstream, retracing the river's winding course, its huge variety of wildlife, enchanting scenery and forests, all reflected in differing colours in the sparkling waters. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Giverny & Vernon

One of the great delights of river cruising is the magical sensation of waking up in a different place from where you were the night before. This morning the ship has moored in delightful Vernon, and we take the short drive to Giverny to visit Monet's garden and house. The artist himself called his garden his 'most beautiful masterpiece', and it's certainly one of the world's most photographed and painted, ideally viewed in the delicate morning light. In the Japanese-inspired water garden, shaded by great weeping willows and surrounded by bamboo, rhododendrons and azaleas, is the lily pond where he painted his extraordinary Les Nymphéas (Water Lilies) series. There's ample time to wander here, absorbing the tranquil atmosphere while marvelling at the light bouncing off foliage of every hue and the magical reflections dancing off the water. After another leisurely lunch on board, you can explore Vernon's quaint buildings before embarking on our cruise to Paris. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Paris

We have arrived in Paris and this morning we take a sightseeing tour of this amazing capital, one of the world's most iconic cities. The Eiffel Tower, Arc de Triomphe, Champs Élysées, Sacré-Coeur – you'll see all these and much more. The grand Place de la Concorde, the largest square in the city, shows off





Les Andelys - Day 2

18th-century French architecture at its best, and just over the Seine on the Left Bank you'll find the Musée d'Orsay, home of the world's finest Impressionist art collection. Then there's the eccentrically modern and yet stylish Pompidou Centre, famous not only for its exhibits but also for street entertainment, while the exquisite Tuileries Gardens are perfect for a stroll. After lunch on board you could visit fine shops such as the Galeries Lafayette or those in the smart arcaded Rue de Rivoli, or perhaps wander around the café-lined streets of bohemian Montmartre. This evening is the Captain's Dinner, hosted of course by the Captain himself. Featuring specialities of the regions through which we have travelled, it's a truly memorable experience. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return flight

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French

balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

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On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

Personalise your holiday

Visit the Louvre Museum, Paris

Don't miss your chance to visit the world's largest museum and admire one of the most impressive art collections in history. From €17 per person.

My view

Insider knowledge

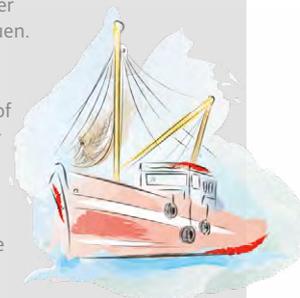
During your visit to Giverny take a peek out of Monet's bedroom window; the splendid view over the glorious gardens must surely have been an inspiration to the artist.

Buy

Magnificent window displays are filled with the artistic and tempting creations of the highly skilled master chocolatiers of Rouen.

Drink

Relax with a glass of Normandy cider or calvados at a harbourside café and soak up the unique atmosphere of Honfleur.



Karim
Cruise Director



Vienna - Days 2 and 7

Vienna, Bohemia & Treasures of the Danube

8 DAYS
from only **£1,699**

April 2021

NEW for 2021

Immerse yourself in the imperial splendour of Austria's refined capital and discover some of the finest baroque architecture and medieval centres in Europe. Marvel at the spectacular views of the Danube Valley and enjoy a classical recital on board as you glide into historic Krems.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Vienna

Fly to Vienna and transfer to your cruise ship.

DAY 2 – Vienna

Included guided tour of Vienna with free time to explore. Afternoon sailing to Krems. Classical music recital on board this evening.

DAY 3 – Krems

Drive to visit Göttweig Abbey. Afternoon and overnight sailing.

DAY 4 – Passau & Aldersbach

Morning sailing to Passau with free time to explore. Included afternoon visit to Aldersbach Monastery. Evening and overnight sailing.

DAY 5 – Regensburg

Included morning guided tour of Regensburg. Afternoon and overnight sailing towards Linz.

DAY 6 – Linz

Morning guided tour of Linz or a full day visit to Český Krumlov Castle. Overnight sailing.

DAY 7 – Vienna

Morning sailing. Enjoy either a free afternoon in Vienna or a visit to Schönbrunn Palace.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return journey.

Passau
- Day 4

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Vienna

You fly to Vienna, where a coach takes you to your river cruise ship, moored in this spectacular city. On arrival the professional friendly crew welcome you on board as you familiarise yourself with the ship and settle in to your cabin. Reconvene with your fellow travelling companions in the bar before tonight's excellent dinner in the elegant restaurant. (D)

DAY 2 – Vienna

The Viennese have a reputation for 'Gemütlichkeit', quite literally 'cosiness', and there can be fewer European capitals more supremely nostalgic or elegantly civilised than Vienna. On our sightseeing tour we enjoy an insight into Viennese life with our local guide. The imperial grandeur of its magnificent architecture speaks for itself – awash with dazzling palaces, grand avenues fringed with fine baroque facades and a majestic cathedral amongst a tangle of historic streets. Home to world-class art collections, museums, orchestras and opera, its cultural heritage is equally extraordinary with countless composers such as Mozart, Strauss and Haydn, all inextricably linked to this 'City of Music'.

The first foreign capital to fall to the Nazis during World War II, then remaining under allied occupation for the following decade, today Vienna serves as one of the headquarters of the United Nations. Surprisingly compact, at the heart you'll find the colossal Gothic Saint Stephen's Cathedral with its striking multicoloured roof. Former royal court of the Habsburgs, the vast Hofburg, now a complex of excellent museums and galleries, also houses the crown jewels, the world-famous Vienna Boys' Choir and Spanish Riding School. Afterwards, there's some free time to explore before returning to the ship for lunch.

Head up on to the sun deck to take in the glorious views as we get our first tantalising glimpses of the lush green slopes of the Danube Valley, sprinkled with sleepy little towns - clusters of red roofs swarming around a baroque church spire. Wooded hills give way to wide fields of maize and sunflowers, and the carefully tended terraces of the region's vineyards. During tonight's dinner we arrive in the medieval town of Krems, after which retire to the lounge to enjoy a live classical recital. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Krems

We take the short drive to visit the hilltop monastery, Göttweig Abbey – its brick-red onion-shaped domes and vast white walls a striking sight amidst the thickly forested verdant slopes. Majestically sited with far-reaching views down into the valley below, the original building was destroyed by fire in the eighteenth century and rebuilt in baroque style. On our guided tour we will see the impressively decorative staircase – up which Napoleon is said to have ridden his horse.



Enjoy lunch as we cruise through the Wachau, as it snakes its way between the vine-clad hills, passing the tiny walled town of Dürnstein with its beautiful blue and white baroque church, swathes of apricot trees and the spectacular mustard-yellow monastery at Melk, teetering on a granite slab high above the river. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Passau & Aldersbach

Overnight we have made steady progress upstream and on rising this morning, draw back the curtains to another captivating view – a scenic landscape peppered with idyllic little towns and ancient riverside castles against a hilly backdrop. Enjoy a leisurely breakfast before heading up on deck to witness our



Your cruise price includes

- 9 visits and guided tours including Vienna, Regensburg and Linz; full day excursion to Český Krumlov with guided tour; guided tour of Göttweig Abbey; and visits to Krems, Passau, Aldersbach Abbey and Schönbrunn Palace
 - 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
 - All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure (except one lunch), including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
 - Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
 - Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)
- Plus, of course...
- Return scheduled flights from 5 regional airports*
 - Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
 - Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
 - All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
 - No surcharges guaranteed
 - ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection
- *A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

arrival in Passau, 'Town of the Three Rivers'; uniquely situated where the Danube meets the rivers Inn and Ilz, an imposing citadel watches over the colourful jumble of quaint houses, baroque churches, palaces and spires, rising from the water's edge. There will be time to wander the old town, exploring its network of winding streets, and picturesque squares, quaint shops and cafés, swarming around the impressive cathedral with its magnificent ornate frescoes and the gothic-style town hall with its lovely decorative clock tower.

This afternoon we visit the attractive town of Aldersbach, principally famed as the site of a former Cistercian abbey. Earliest records show the abbey was founded in 1127 and well regarded for its religious discipline, became widely influential and went on to flourish for more than six centuries until the secularisation of Bavaria in the early nineteenth century when the buildings were sold, and the church converted to serve the local parish. We enjoy a guided tour seeing the breathtaking interior of one of the most important baroque churches in southern Germany, with its flamboyant stuccowork, intricate gold-leaf and elaborate ceiling frescoes and learning more about the monks who made their life here. We'll also visit the abbey's historic brewery and museum. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Regensburg

Our ship reaches the northernmost point of the Danube and the delightful city of Regensburg, a former Roman garrison town

and Germany's 'medieval miracle'. After a leisurely breakfast we enjoy a guided tour through the twisting streets of the old town, admiring the warmly painted facades of the picturesque houses, the wondrous gothic cathedral and old town hall with its lofty eight-storey tower, and the hefty stone remains of a Roman gateway that once marked the city's northern entrance. Afterwards enjoy some free time exploring under your own steam; take a stroll over the iconic thirteenth century bridge and take in the view, much as it has been for centuries, before retiring to a cosy, tucked away café to enjoy the enchanting ambience of this historic place.

Spend the afternoon at leisure on board; perhaps up on deck enjoying the views as fortified castles and ancient churches idly drift by. There will be ample photo opportunities as we cruise through the iconic natural wonder of the Danube Loop, where the water spectacularly carves its path in an almost 360-degree bend, flanked on all sides by steep lushly forested slopes. Evening falls and our chef serves up tonight's excellent dinner in the relaxed ambience of the ship's restaurant. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Linz

Dawn breaks and we reach vibrant Linz, the capital of Upper Austria. Straddling the banks of the river, the Romans recognised its geographical importance at the crossroads of the Danube Valley and the old salt road

into Bohemia and today it is still a significant port. You may wish to remain in the city and join our guided tour as we wander through the old town, stopping to admire the elegant merchants' houses encircling one of the finest squares in Austria. There's the grand regional parliament building plus a host of interesting little churches and, surveying the river below, the vast fortress-like castle now housing a museum with various historic exhibits and artworks, plus the modern art museum or for technology enthusiasts there's the remarkable Ars Electronica.

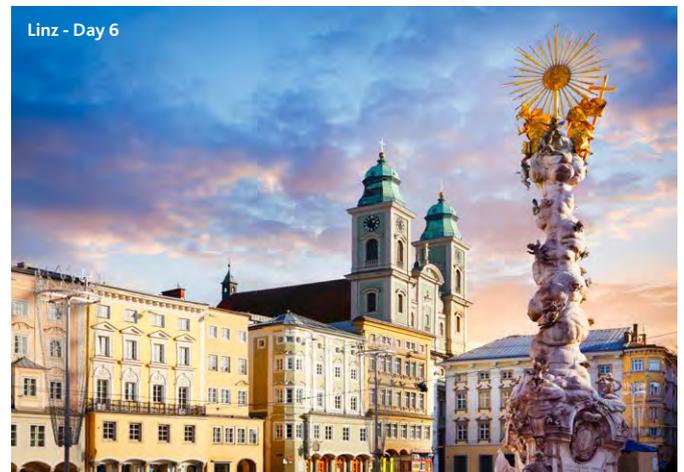
Alternatively, you may choose to join our excursion to the beautiful medieval town of Český Krumlov, in the heart of scenic Bohemia, amidst a fairytale landscape of rolling hills, tumbling mountain streams and glassy lakes, with a wonderful mountain backdrop. On arrival we enjoy a guided tour of this UNESCO World Heritage Site, nestling on the banks of the Vltava River: the magnificent castle, set in extensive gardens, dating back to medieval times with one of the best preserved baroque theatres in the world, perches high above a jumble of terracotta roofs below. Please note lunch is not included on this full day excursion to Český Krumlov, however the ship will offer a packed lunch.* (B,*L,D)

DAY 7 – Vienna

During another superb lunch, you can tweak those final plans as to how you intend to spend the rest of the day. For art lovers, the renowned Kunsthistorisches Museum is a



Götweig Abbey - Day 3



Linz - Day 6



Regensburg - Day 5

Schönbrunn Palace - Day 7



must; containing the fourth largest collection of paintings in the world. You might choose to return to one of the Hofburg's museums, perhaps the Imperial Treasury, containing the Habsburgs' crown jewels or take a stroll in the Prater with its huge famous Ferris wheel. Don't forget to leave time to indulge in the Viennese institution of a coffee in one of the beautiful atmospheric cafés where you can sit and watch the world go by over a slice of Sachertorte.

Alternatively, you might choose to join our visit to Schönbrunn, the Habsburgs' splendid summer palace. Your included entrance and audio guide allows you into the dazzling state rooms, with their wealth of priceless artworks, stunning parquet floors and the family's impressive royal carriages. Take a stroll through the charming formal gardens, admiring the beautifully tended flowerbeds and neatly clipped hedges.

Tonight as a fitting finale, the magnificent Captain's Dinner is served, after which retire to the lounge one last time, to share memories of this magical cruise with newly-made friends (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

My view

Insider knowledge

Höllgasse in Passau is also known as "Artists Alley". Follow the rainbow painted cobbles to the charming artisan shops and galleries.

Read

Danube: A Cultural History by Andrew Beattie explores the turbulent past and vibrant present of the landscape through which the Danube flows.

Taste

The Linzertorte is a cross between a cake and a tart. A pastry case made with ground hazelnuts is filled with raspberry jam and topped with a lattice of golden pastry. Try a slice in Linz, the city that gave the tart its name.



Leslie
Cruise Director



Rhine & Moselle

8 DAYS
from only **£1,899**

October 2021

Experience the contrast between the bustling Rhine and the serene Moselle, lined with castle ruins, steep vineyards and sleepy half-timbered villages. Sail some of Europe's most romantic waterways to the cobbled streets of Bernkastel, ancient Koblenz and, of course, the 'Pearl of the Rhine'.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cologne

Fly to Düsseldorf or Cologne or take the Eurostar to Brussels and transfer to your cruise ship. Overnight sailing.

DAY 2 – Cochem

Morning sailing. Included afternoon guided tour of Cochem with free time to explore.

DAY 3 – Trier

Morning sailing. Afternoon drive to Trier for a walking tour. Return to ship, now moored at Bernkastel.

DAY 4 – Bernkastel

Included morning guided tour of Bernkastel. Afternoon and overnight sailing.

DAY 5 – Koblenz & Boppard

Included morning walking tour of Koblenz. Afternoon sailing to Boppard for an included tour.

DAY 6 – Rhine Gorge & Rudesheim

Morning cruise through the Rhine Gorge. Included afternoon guided tour of Rudesheim.

DAY 7 – Cologne

Morning sailing to Cologne. Included afternoon guided tour of Cologne with free time to explore.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return journey.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cologne

Arrive for your flight to Düsseldorf or Cologne or take the Eurostar from London St Pancras International to Brussels. On arrival, transfer by coach to your five-star cruise ship moored in the heart of Cologne, one of Germany's oldest cities. The friendly crew will welcome you and help you to your cabin. After settling into your spacious and well-equipped accommodation, it's time to familiarise yourself with the many first-class aspects of this floating boutique hotel. (D)

DAY 2 – Cochem

The first morning on board a river cruise is always a thrill, awakening to the peaceful lapping of the water outside as the scenic valley sides slip past your cabin window – there's no other holiday experience quite like it. Breakfast is a leisurely affair; life on board is unhurried, so you can linger over that extra cup of tea or coffee. You're cruising some of Europe's most dramatic and romantic waterways – the mighty River Rhine and its tributary the Moselle. The Sun Deck is perfect for an invigorating mid-morning stroll, watching picture-postcard villages with slanting timber-framed houses pass by.

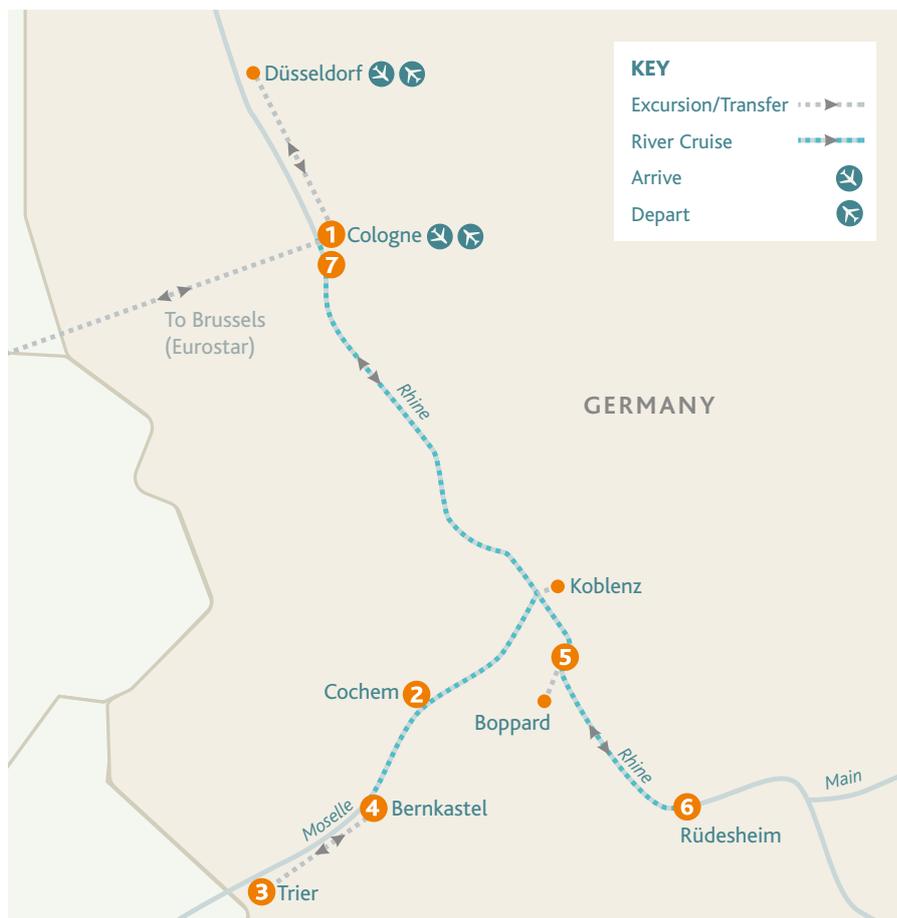
After a delicious lunch we glide into our moorings at Cochem, the traditional centre of the Moselle wine trade, for an afternoon guided tour. Dominating the scene is a multi-turreted castle crowning a vineyard covered hillside, but Cochem's real charm is its jumble of narrow streets lined with pastel coloured buildings and peppered with quirky shops and wine cellars.

There's ample time to explore here, immersing yourself in the relaxed ambience of this quintessential riverside town, before stepping back on board to enjoy the chef's choices for dinner, served in the splendid ship's restaurant. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Trier

Leaving Cochem, we pass through an impressive series of four locks. All around are steep, tree-crested slopes covered in a patchwork of vineyards, crisscrossed by narrow tracks and roads giving workers access to the vines – it's a miracle that anything can be cultivated on such terrain. Before long we approach the delightful town of Zell, famed for the Collis Turm and Figur der "Zeller Schwarze Katz".

After lunch we drive to Trier for an afternoon tour of one of Germany's most fascinating cities – and its oldest. Founded by the Romans, it was the capital of much of their empire, encompassing present-day Spain, France, Britain and parts of Germany. The city had a population of 80,000 people – an enormous number in ancient times – and the Emperor Constantine lived here. Many of its Roman monuments, including the amphitheatre, baths and bridge, have survived surprisingly intact, but most impressive is the Porta Nigra, a fortified gate made of huge stone



blocks that towers above the surrounding medieval buildings. This is the largest and best-preserved Roman city gate north of the Alps and stands as testimony to their architectural genius. Such is the significance of Trier's Roman heritage and its other buildings, including its Cathedral, the oldest bishop's church in Germany, that together they form a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

We return to our ship, moored in the charming town of Bernkastel, in time for another exquisite meal. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Bernkastel

After a delicious breakfast on board, join the expert guided tour of Bernkastel town, a romantic wonder from another age. Wander its cobbled streets to the market square, where you'll be surrounded by ornate half-

Your cruise price includes

- 7 guided tours of Cologne, Koblenz, Bernkastel, Trier, Boppard, Rudesheim and Cochem
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 4 regional airports or seat on Eurostar from London St Pancras International with regional rail connections available*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

timbered houses, many dating from the 15th-century. Most famous is the Pointed House, a jewel of the rustic middle-class building tradition from the Middle Ages and a classic example of a Moselle vintner's dwelling. You might spot the famous Graacher Tor too, built in 1300, the last remaining gate and now home to a museum of local history.

We have lunch on board as the ship slips its moorings and cruises back downstream. This afternoon, sit back on one of the comfortable deck chairs on the Sun Deck and soak up the atmosphere of this magical river, breathing in the clean air, listening to the rippling water and absorbing the scenery. Another gourmet experience awaits this evening in the ship's restaurant, possibly followed by a nightcap in the company of newly made friends. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Koblenz & Boppard

Early this morning, we reach Koblenz. Strategically situated at the confluence of these two great rivers, this 2,000-year-old city, with its mighty fortress towering above, is full of appeal. It's known for the Deutsches Eck, translating as German Corner, a point between the Rhine and Moselle with spectacular views. A knowledgeable local guide accompanies us around its principal monuments and intriguing centre, taking in historic squares, highlighting painstakingly restored house frontages and revealing hidden aspects of the city that only locals know. Koblenz is a joy to wander through, pausing to window shop while trying to resist the aromas of fresh coffee and cakes drifting from the numerous traditional cafés.

Returning to our ship for lunch, we proceed to Boppard, known as the 'Pearl of the Rhine', for

a guided tour. A famously picturesque town located on a long, looping bend of the river, discover the captivating cobbled streets, lined by half-timbered houses, tucked-away shops selling traditional goods and characterful restaurants, into the town and its main square. Like many riverside settlements in the area, the Romans founded Boppard and their legacy remains in the superbly preserved town walls, the finest in Germany. There's time to explore or stroll along the river, gazing at views of the vineyard-covered hillsides. Or you can simply pass time on board in anticipation of more fine dining in the ship's restaurant this evening. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Rhine Gorge & Rudesheim

Leaving Boppard, as the sun crests the surrounding hilltops, expectation rises at what lies in store as we journey through the outstanding natural beauty of the Rhine Gorge, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Here, at every dramatic turn of the river, towering valley slopes are crowned by the precarious ruins of castles built by princes to display their power and extort tolls from passing river traffic. The Gorge is home to medieval legends, tales of mysterious happenings and dark deeds, most famously the Lorelei – or 'murmuring rock' – said to have lured passing boats onto the rocks with its irresistible song. The villages drifting by – Saint Goar, Bacharach and Kaub – are synonymous with wine production and one of the many thoughtful details of this cruise is the carefully compiled wine list, from which you can choose fine Rhine and Moselle wines to enjoy with the foods sourced from the region.

During lunch, we arrive in Rudesheim, for a

guided tour with our local expert. Perhaps the best known of all the wine towns, the picturesque crooked houses slope down from wooded hillsides and terraced vineyards. Meander through the Market Place, Brömserburg Castle and the charming Klunkhardshof, a monumental half-timbered building dating back to the first half of the 16th-century. You'll also see the Brömserhof, now the home of Siegfried's excellent mechanical music museum – a collection of around 350 intricate antique musical instruments and musical boxes from all over the world, many in working order, still playing the delicate sounds of yesteryear. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Cologne

We slip our mooring early this morning as you enjoy another fine breakfast with views of pretty riverside towns, backed by the rolling volcanic hills for which the area is renowned. It's not long before we reach the railway bridge at Remagen, captured intact towards the end of the Second World War, thereby arguably shortening the war in Germany. Not long after, we draw in to the heart of Cologne, in the shadow of the magnificent dual-spired Gothic cathedral for which the city is so famous. It's a truly monumental building, taking over 600 years to build and featuring myriad religious and art treasures and perhaps the most intricate stained glass windows in Europe.

After lunch, we join a local guide for an informative tour of the city, with time to explore its tree-lined squares and perhaps visit one of its traditional bars, many of which still brew their own beer. Modern art enthusiasts may wish to visit Museum Ludwig, featuring



Trier - Day 3



Bernkastel - Day 4



Reichsburg Castle, Cochem - Day 2



Cologne - Day 7

works from German expressionists, as well as American pop art and abstract pieces. Whilst the Römisch-Germanisches Museum embraces the rich Roman history with many preserved items and artefacts found along the Rhine. Even outside of the museum, you can see signs of Cologne's Roman past with walls, aqueducts, gates and towers dotted around the city, such as the Römerturm tower, with its preserved mosaic decoration.

This evening the Captain's Dinner takes place on board, during which delicious specialities of the regions you've visited will be served, hosted by the Captain himself, of course. After dinner, enjoy a final digestif in the bar while reflecting on the memories made on this wonderful cruise through the romantic heartlands of Germany's most iconic rivers. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-

to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant, take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

Personalise your holiday

Moselle wine tasting

Sample a selection of the delightful wines produced in the stunning Moselle valley, reputedly the steepest cultivated vineyards in the world. From € 11.50 per person.

My view

Insider knowledge

Walk across the Hohenzollern Bridge to the Rhine Boulevard and take in the splendid views of Cologne which are particularly lovely at sunset. This is also the perfect spot for "Kaffee und Kuchen" or a local beer.

Read

Legends of the Rhine by Wilhelm Ruland is the definitive collection of folk legends and folklore of the Rhine region.

Drink

Grapes for Eiswein are picked in the winter. Freezing concentrates the flavour, making this Moselle wine the sweetest.



Andras
Cruise Director

Marvel at the magnificent peaks
of the Bernese Oberland - Day 7



Rhine Cruise to Switzerland

8 DAYS
from only **£1,999**

August 2021

Take in some of the most breathtaking views of Rudesheim, Strasbourg and Lucerne, gliding through the spectacular Rhine Gorge, picturesque pines of the Black Forest and the majestic Swiss alpine peaks.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cologne

Fly to Düsseldorf or Cologne or take the Eurostar to Brussels and transfer to your cruise ship.

DAY 2 – Koblenz

Morning sailing. Included afternoon guided tour of Koblenz.

DAY 3 – Rhine Gorge & Rudesheim

Morning cruise through the Rhine Gorge. Included afternoon guided tour of Rudesheim.

DAY 4 – Speyer

Morning sailing. Included afternoon guided tour of Speyer. Overnight sailing.

DAY 5 – Strasbourg

Morning sailing. Included afternoon guided tour of Strasbourg with free time to explore. Overnight sailing.

DAY 6 – Breisach & Black Forest

Absorb the breathtaking vistas of the Vosges and Black Forest as we arrive in historic Breisach. Later drive through the heart of this

stunning region to the archetypal lakeside town of Titisee.

DAY 7 – Lucerne & Bernese Oberland

Full day visit to Lucerne and Bernese Oberland.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport or train station for your return journey.

Please note: on some dates, this cruise operates in reverse order. You will experience the same tours and visits. See the price booklet for details.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Cologne

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Düsseldorf or Cologne, or take the Eurostar to Brussels from London St Pancras International. On arrival, transfer by coach to your cruise ship moored in the heart of picturesque Cologne. The dedicated English-speaking crew will welcome you aboard your first-class floating hotel, ensuring you settle into your luxurious, well-equipped cabin and familiarise yourself with the ship. (D)

DAY 2 – Koblenz

As you wake to a sumptuous breakfast, the delights of this river cruise begin to emerge as we drift past the first rolling hills of the Rhine Valley. The forested Siebenberge – Seven Mountains – a cluster of ancient volcanic hills that inspired many of the Brothers Grimm's legends, including 'Snow White', act as the overture for even more dramatic scenery upstream. We cruise past the famous ruined bridge at Remagen, which was captured intact by the Allies towards the end of the Second World War, allowing thousands of troops to cross into Germany's heartland. Pretty waterfront towns and carefully tended vineyards come into view as we glide gently into our mooring to visit delightful Koblenz for a guided tour.

Founded by the Romans, this historic city is beautifully located at the confluence of the Rhine and its sister river the Moselle. Discover Koblenz's maze of medieval buildings in the Altstadt – old town – which is studded with a fine array of traditional shops and classic Rhineland cafés. As you wander, historic buildings appear seemingly at every turn; see a former mint, the Four Towers – 17th-century houses with striking turrets set at a crossroads – and many fascinating squares and churches, including the 9th-century Basilica of Saint Kastor.

Wherever you wander you're never far from a riverbank, and it's worth crossing the 14th-century stone Balduin Bridge across the Moselle for fine views back across the spires of the Altstadt. Tonight, enjoy a meticulously prepared dinner on board, and afterwards perhaps a quiet stroll along the riverside promenade to the Deutsches Eck – 'German Corner' – where the great rivers Rhine and Moselle meet. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Rhine Gorge & Rudesheim

Slipping our mooring at Koblenz we proceed upstream on the Rhine and soon encounter the impressive Marksburg Castle, a fortress dating back to the 13th-century. We then weave through the huge looping bend – one of the most impressive on the river – at Boppard, a wonderfully picturesque town known as the 'Pearl of the Rhine'. Journeying further, you explore the most famous of all the river's reaches and a real highlight of the cruise, the dramatic Rhine Gorge: steep vineyards give way to almost vertical rocky outcrops towering more than 600 feet above the



sweeping valley sides. Sailing past Saint Goar and the many ruined castles, there's a real sense of the myths surrounding this historic river coming alive around you.

After lunch we moor in Rudesheim, a classic Rhine wine village with crooked houses sloping down from wooded hillsides and terraced vineyards. During this afternoon's delightful walking tour, witness the bustling

marketplace, the half-timbered Klunkhardshof and Bromserburg Castle, which dates from 1275. This afternoon we enjoy a guided tour of Rudesheim, known for its traditional Market Place, Brömserburg Castle, dating back to 1275, and the Klunkhardshof, a monumental half-timbered building dated back to the first half of the 16th-century. After dinner this evening, another sumptuous affair prepared by

Your cruise price includes

- 7 guided tours including Strasbourg, a drive through the Black Forest to Titisee, and a full-day excursion to Lucerne and the Bernese Oberland. Plus Koblenz, Rudesheim, Breisach and Speyer
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 3 regional airports or seats on Eurostar from London St Pancras International and TGV*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

your chef, maybe sample a small Asbach – the famous brandy distilled in Rudesheim – while watching the last of the ferries crossing the river in the moonlight glow. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Speyer

Still sailing upstream, the landscape becomes much wider and flatter, with gently rolling hills and vineyards that are home to the Liebfraumilch wines. Occasionally the excited chatter of birdlife breaks out as we pass oxbow lakes, long deserted by the river flow, which are now havens for over a hundred bird species.

Today we berth in historic Speyer, founded by the Celts and one of Germany's oldest cities, celebrated for its illustrious past, for an afternoon walking tour. The breathtaking Imperial Cathedral, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, is among the largest Romanesque churches in the world; it's also one of the finest. Its beautiful four-roomed crypt is the resting place of many Holy Roman emperors and German kings. Another landmark is the magnificent neo-Gothic Gedächtniskirche, built at the turn of the 20th-century to commemorate the 1529 'Protestation at Speyer', a significant event when a group of Martin Luther's followers protested against his imperial ban – henceforth Luther's religious followers were known as 'Protestants'. There's free time to explore here before stepping back on board for another splendid dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Strasbourg

This morning we cruise gently upstream, passing through two spectacular locks, whose elaborate engineering never ceases to

fascinate. Why not find a comfortable chair and catch up on some reading, play chess or watch the rolling kaleidoscope of scenery from the Sun Deck?

We soon arrive in France and moor in Strasbourg, capital of the Alsace region. This afternoon we have a walking tour of its old town, bisected by canals and made up of a maze of narrow streets lined with timber-framed houses and sculptured portals. Marvel at the stunning Cathédrale Notre-Dame de Strasbourg, with a range of architectural inspiration from 12th-century Romanesque to 15th-century Late Gothic. Unforgettable sights include the colourful Alsatian style Maison Kammerzell, multi-towered Ponts Couverts – covered bridges – and the pretty Petite France quarter of pastel-coloured former artisans' houses lining the canals. Don't be surprised if you're tempted to linger a while in a typical Alsatian café to sample some of the region's world-famous wines – a crisp Riesling or that particular speciality of Alsace, spicy Gewürztraminer. Back on board this evening there's a truly memorable occasion – the 'Captain's Dinner', featuring delicious specialities of the countries and regions we visit during our cruise. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Breisach & Black Forest

Your final day cruising is spent gliding through the dramatic scenery of the rift valley separating the Vosges and Black Forest mountains. We arrive at the ancient town of Breisach, whose historic heart is surrounded by stone ramparts and dominated by the impressive Saint Stephan's Cathedral. Later you drive through some of Central Europe's

most stunning scenery – the Black Forest Mountains. This is a fabled landscape of rugged valleys, white-water rivers, cascading waterfalls and rolling hillsides covered with huge, densely packed pine trees – exactly as you expect it to be. Our destination is the idyllic village of Titisee, nestling on the shores of its crystal-clear lake. Rejoining the ship, we resume our stately passage upriver. As the sun sets and the riverside lights begin to twinkle there are wonderful views over the imposing Vosges massif. You enjoy this evening's dinner en route to Switzerland and our next mooring at Basel. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Lucerne & Bernese Oberland

Today we take the short drive to Lucerne, often considered Switzerland's most beautiful city, spectacularly situated among stunning mountain views. It has been attracting well-heeled visitors for two centuries, including our very own Queen Victoria. Highly recommended is an invigorating stroll along the Chapel Bridge, a unique covered wooden walkway crossing the lake, supported by stilts and lined with colourful flower-filled window boxes. Not only is it the city's most iconic structure, it's a superb way to absorb Lucerne's regal atmosphere.

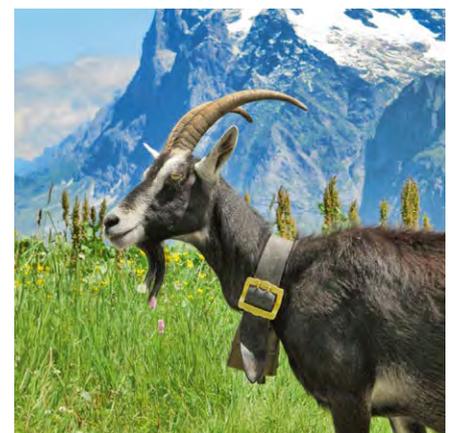
As you enter the Bernese Oberland in central Switzerland, the views become quite literally breathtaking! This is the grand alpine heart of Europe with some of the finest mountain scenery on earth, described by the composer Mendelssohn as 'the most wonderful of all in this unbelievably beautiful country'. On viewing the legendary snow-capped peaks of the Eiger, Mönch and Jungfrau you'll be



Lucerne - Day 7



Feldberg mountain, Black Forest - Day 6





quite simply awestruck. We then ascend by mountain railway for more extraordinary vistas, with the crystal-clear lakes reflecting the meadows and forests below. This truly magical landscape is sure to enchant you. Later we'll descend again by mountain railway before returning to the ship. Please note, temperatures will be significantly lower at altitude, even during the summer months, so it's advisable to pack suitable clothing. Lunch is not included on this full day excursion; however the ship will offer a packed lunch.* (B,*L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or upgraded accommodation. Select one of our middle or upper deck cabins or suites, with floor-to-ceiling windows that open up to a French balcony. Or for the ultimate in luxury, upgrade to one of our superior or deluxe suites, with either French or private outside balcony where you can enjoy a refreshing drink.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant, take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

On-board credit

Plan ahead by purchasing on-board credit before you sail. Available in denominations of €50, add an amount to suit you, to spend as you wish. Enjoy drinks in the bar and restaurant at any time, indulge in a spa or salon treatment or choose something from the on-board boutique. Please note gratuities cannot be paid using on-board credit.

Extend your holiday

3-night Glacier Express

Add four days to your trip, staying in Chur and Zermatt, travelling on the Glacier Express, and seeing the most iconic peak in Switzerland, the Matterhorn.

My view

Insider knowledge

Escape from the hustle and bustle of the city and relax with a drink at one of the welcoming bars and cafés in the tree-lined Place du Marché-Gayot, one of Strasbourg's most enchanting squares.

Read

The Rhine by Ben Coates tells a fascinating story of how a great river has helped shape Europe.

Taste

A cross between hash browns and a potato pancake, rosti is the national dish of Switzerland. Perfect for breakfast or lunch this hearty treat is usually accompanied with cheese or bacon.

Sabi
Cruise Director



Amsterdam, Cologne and the Best of Holland & Flanders

8 DAYS
from only **£1,899**

May 2021

NEW for 2021

Wander the picture-perfect streets of medieval towns, gaze in awe at magnificent Gothic architecture, discover contemporary urban landscapes and the iconic windmills of a bygone age – our superb cruise embraces the rich and diverse cultural heritage of these northern European neighbours, inextricably linked by history and their fascinating waterways.

Your cruise at a glance

DAY 1 – Arrival in Amsterdam

Fly to Amsterdam or take the Eurostar to Brussels and then the Thalys train to Amsterdam. Transfer to your cruise ship.

DAY 2 – Amsterdam

Included guided tour of Amsterdam in a glass-topped canal cruiser. Overnight sailing.

DAY 3 – Rotterdam & Kinderdijk

Included morning guided tour of Rotterdam's architecture. Afternoon sailing and included guided tour of Kinderdijk windmills. Overnight sailing.

DAY 4 – Bruges & Ghent

Included full day visit to Bruges with guided tour or option to return to Ghent for included afternoon guided tour. Overnight sailing.

DAY 5 – Antwerp

Included morning guided tour of Antwerp. Afternoon and overnight sailing.

DAY 6 – Arnhem

Included visit to either the Airborne Museum or included visit to Het Loo Palace with guided tour. Afternoon and overnight sailing.

DAY 7 – Cologne

Included morning guided tour of Cologne with entrance to the cathedral.

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the airport or train station for your return journey.

Your itinerary

DAY 1 – Arrival in Amsterdam

Arrive at the airport for your flight to Amsterdam or take the Eurostar from London St Pancras International to Brussels, where you change trains and continue to Amsterdam. On arrival, transfer by coach to your five-star cruise ship. The friendly crew welcomes you to your spacious and superbly furnished accommodation – you'll feel immediately at home on your first-class floating hotel. The ship remains here overnight, so watch dusk descend over Amsterdam as you enjoy your first dinner on board. (D)

DAY 2 – Amsterdam

This morning, awake to the colourful canalside of Amsterdam as you enjoy a delicious breakfast on board. We embark on a charming glass-topped canal cruiser to begin exploring this beautiful city. With a network of 165 17th-century canals radiating from the city centre, taking to the water really is the best way to immerse yourself in Amsterdam's history and culture.

As you drift between the cobbled streets, fringed with tall, narrow merchants' houses, past characterful houseboats and interesting bridges, your guide imparts a wealth of knowledge about life, past and present in this unique city, once home to the famous Dutch painter Rembrandt and the legendary Anne Frank, who wrote her world-famous diaries whilst in hiding during the Nazi occupation. Amsterdam is an incredible city to explore on foot too. This afternoon our ship remains moored, so you can wander its inspiring streets at your leisure. If art is your passion, then no visit would be complete without experiencing the vast collection of masterpieces housed in the extraordinary Rijksmuseum or Van Gogh Museum.

Alternatively head to the vibrant Jordaan district, crammed with independent galleries, quirky shops and fashionable cafés from where you can linger over a refreshing locally-brewed beer and watch the Amsterdammers skilfully dodging each other on their high-handlebarred cycles. Step back in time with a thought-provoking visit to Anne Frank's house or enjoy bargain-hunting in the bustling Waterlooplein flea market, the largest in Europe. Feeling peckish? If raw herring, a Dutch delicacy often accompanied by gherkins and diced onions, from a traditional haringhandel (herring stand) doesn't appeal, perhaps opt for a plate of mouth-watering poffertjes, mini pancakes dusted with sugar. (B,L,D)

DAY 3 – Rotterdam & Kinderdijk

Clustered at the mouth of the Rhine as it flows into the North Sea, Rotterdam's destiny as a trading gateway to Europe and beyond was almost assured, and after breakfast this morning, you will enjoy a guided tour of this vibrant city, learning more about the history of its maritime past as well as its thriving cultural scene. Although it suffered massive bomb damage during the Second World War, the



city was completely reconstructed, resulting in some interesting and quirky architectural styles, including the Witte Huis, Europe's first skyscraper, built in the Art Nouveau style.

We'll also see the Church of Saint Lawrence, the only surviving building of the original old town, the Erasmus Bridge, nick-named 'the swan' because of its avian-like shape and the arched market hall, plus the famous yellow Cube Houses, known locally as Kubuswoningen. Designed by Dutch architect Piet Blom in the 1970s, strikingly built on stilts

and tilted at quirky angles, they remain an iconic and unique feature to this day.

Back on board, as we continue our journey to Kinderdijk this afternoon, take in the lovely views through the restaurant's panoramic windows over a delicious lunch. We soon arrive at the very heart of this captivating region to witness a truly striking polder scene – a series of 19 authentic windmills lining the canal banks, set against a starkly beautiful backdrop of pancake-flat marshland. Windmills are symbolic of Dutch history

Your cruise price includes

- 8 visits and tours including a canal cruise in Amsterdam and guided tours of Cologne, Antwerp, Bruges, Ghent and Rotterdam and visits to Kinderdijk, Airborne Museum or Het Loo Palace
- 7 nights on board in your choice of luxury cabin or suite, with river views
- All meals on board from dinner on your day of arrival through to breakfast on your day of departure, including welcome cocktails, a welcome dinner and the Captain's Dinner
- Complimentary on-board tea and coffee
- Complimentary on-board Wi-Fi (connection speeds may vary)

Plus, of course...

- Return scheduled flights from 4 regional airports or seats on Eurostar / Thalys from London St Pancras International*
- Five-star service from an English-speaking crew and knowledgeable local guides
- Services of a Riviera Travel cruise director and concierge
- All port charges, airport taxes and overseas transfers
- No surcharges guaranteed
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

*A supplement may apply

(B) Breakfast, (L) Lunch, (D) Dinner

Prices are per person. Departure dates, prices and ship information – see price booklet

and its never-ending battle with the sea, and visiting these meticulously preserved structures is like stepping back in time. It's no surprise that the windmills, recognised for their significance within Dutch history and heritage, now enjoy an esteemed UNESCO status. Later we return to our cruise ship, where the chef has prepared an inviting dinner. (B,L,D)

DAY 4 – Bruges & Ghent

Overnight our ship has glided stealthily downstream and you wake in the medieval city of Ghent. Today's included excursion takes us to nearby and quintessentially beautiful Bruges, known for its serene canals, narrow cobbled streets, romantic gabled houses, exquisite churches and myriad shops selling artisan goods – and of course its legendary chocolate! After breakfast we take the short drive to this picture-perfect city; exquisitely compact, its entire historic centre is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and as you wander its historic streets, stories from our expert guide will bring it to life.

We begin in its medieval heart, the Markt, which has served as the main market square since the 10th century. Towering 272 feet over the colourful gabled buildings framing the square is the Belfry and its 47-bell carillon. Another must is the Church of Our Lady, where you can see Michelangelo's Madonna and Child, a work of incomparable beauty carved in white Carrara marble. Whilst you

might be reluctant to leave this enchanting place, later this afternoon you can choose between staying in Bruges and returning to the ship a little later, or returning to Ghent for an included afternoon guided tour.

Ghent is a medieval gem, once Western Europe's second largest city after Paris. Spared the ravages of the 20th century, you can stroll along its magnificently unspoilt waterfront, gazing upon the 13th-century skyline punctured by soaring belfries, with the 12th-century Gravenstein fortress towering above. See the impressive Gothic Saint Bavo's Cathedral, whose altarpiece is one of the world's foremost art treasures – the van Eyck brothers' Adoration of the Mystic Lamb. After tonight's superb dinner, we leave these fascinating cities behind, as our elegant vessel cruises on towards Antwerp overnight, along the River Scheldt. (B,L,D)

DAY 5 – Antwerp

The Scheldt has always been Antwerp's lifeline, and records showing the earliest settlers arrived here in the 2nd century, the river acting as a natural barrier against invasion. The 12th century city walls were built in an attempt to keep out the Flemish who finally annexed the city in 1357. With increasing numbers of ships arriving from Italy, together with the birth of the Flemish weaving industry, the city became an important warehouse for English wool and period of significant prosperity ensued. Belgium's second city,

Antwerp's charming and cosmopolitan atmosphere draws you in, as you immerse yourself amongst its winding, cobbled streets and spectacular historic buildings, juxtaposed by more modern architecture fringing lanes of lively cafés and tempting shops. This morning we enjoy a tour with a local guide who'll impart their knowledge about the city's highlights as well as some lesser-known but equally fascinating sights. At its heart is the captivating main square – the Grote Markt – dominated by ornately gabled guildhouses and the Renaissance town hall. The opulent Brabo Fountain is a famous sight too, with its turquoise-grey finish dominating the square's skyline.

One of the delights of river cruising is the magical experience of watching the seamlessly changing landscapes drifting by through the panoramic windows or up on the sun deck; so after lunch this afternoon, there's ample time to unwind and catch up on some reading, indulge in the spa or simply enjoy a glass of wine as the riverside views gently roll by. (B,L,D)

DAY 6 – Arnhem

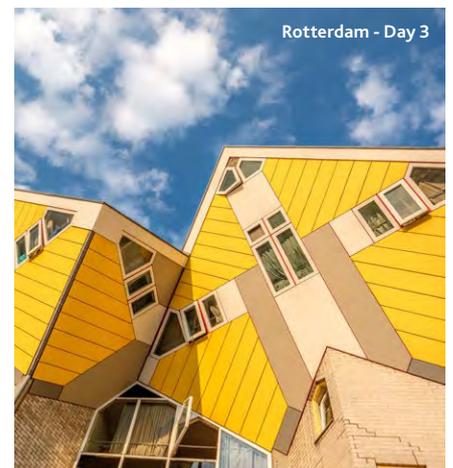
Awake this morning to find overnight our vessel has gently brought us to the very heart of Holland. We have arrived in Arnhem, synonymous with the ill-fated 1944 aerial assault, devised by General Montgomery to end World War II, depicted in the film A Bridge Too Far. This morning you have a choice of two excursions: either a fascinating visit to the



Antwerp - Day 5



Amsterdam - Day 2



Rotterdam - Day 3



Cologne - Day 7

Airborne Museum at Oosterbeek or to Het Loo Palace, royal residence at Apeldoorn.

For those choosing the former, we head to the battle HQ of the British 1st Airborne Division, now an exceptional museum with memorabilia, artwork and accounts relating to this famous and complex battle. There will also be an opportunity to visit the Commonwealth War Cemetery, the final resting place of so many. If the latter appeals to you, join an expert guide on our visit to the exquisite Het Loo Palace, built for William, Prince of Orange and later King of England, Scotland and Ireland. Set in lush countryside, it's a fine example of Dutch Baroque architecture, set in several hundred hectares of parkland with beautifully symmetrical manicured gardens designed by Claude Desgotz. We re-join our ship for an afternoon of picturesque sailing so sink into a comfy chair in the lounge and recharge over a cup of afternoon tea before thoughts turn to tonight's mouthwatering meal prepared by our on-board chefs. (B,L,D)

DAY 7 – Cologne

If you're enjoying an early coffee on the sun deck, you will witness our stately arrival in the magnificent city of Cologne. On this morning's guided tour, led by a knowledgeable local guide, we'll discover some of its highlights and enjoy entry into the spectacular twin-spired cathedral, the largest Gothic church in Northern Europe, miraculous survivor of Second World War bombing and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. It took six centuries to complete, and among its many treasures are the magnificent stained-glass windows and

gilded sarcophagus said to contain the remains of the three kings from the Nativity story.

We also see the vibrant old town, beautifully restored and boasting an abundance of excellent shopping and cosy bars, some of which still brew their own beer. You'll have some free time to explore the city under your own steam; perhaps you'll opt for a spot of shopping in the Belgian quarter with its quirky boutiques, to pick up some last minute souvenirs or spend your final afternoon reflecting on this superb cruise over a glass of local Kölsch, traditionally brewed in the city and recognisable by its bright yellow hue. As night falls, a sumptuous dinner provides the perfect finale to this memorable cruise. (B,L,D)

DAY 8 – Return home

Transfer to the train station or airport for your return flight to the UK. (B)

Your options

Choose your cabin or suite

Choose from a range of standard or superior suites. For the ultimate in luxury, treat yourself to a stay in a deluxe suite.

Purchase a drinks package

Our package offers a selection of drinks served during lunch and dinner. When it's time to dine in the restaurant take your pick from a range of draught beer, non-alcoholic beer, soft drinks, juices and red, white and rosé house wines by the glass. Drinks packages do not include drinks from the bar. Priced at £99 per person.

My view

Insider knowledge

Originally a group of dwellings for semi-monastic women in the 17th century, the Bequingage is a haven of peace in the heart of Bruges. Enjoy the tranquil garden and relax at one of the pretty cafés close by.

Watch

Based on Tracy Chevalier's novel of the same name, scenes from the cinematic homage to 17th century Flemish painters, *Girl with a Pearl Earring* were shot on location in Amsterdam.

Buy

No 4711 Glockengasse in Cologne is home to one of the world's oldest fragrance brands and the iconic 4711 Eau de Cologne has been produced in the city since the late 18th century.

Taste

The Antwerp Handjes is a unique 'hand shaped' chocolate and almond biscuit. This local delicacy originates from the grisly legend of a giant who cut off the hands of sailors who refused to pay a toll to enter the port of Antwerp.

Jessie
Cruise Director

CRUISE THE BEAUTIFUL ADRIATIC COAST BY YACHT

Imagine yourself reclining under an azure sky, as the teak deck moves almost imperceptibly with the rhythm of the Mediterranean. You're relaxed aboard your very own yacht as it glides through the crystal waters of the beautiful Adriatic. The modest dimensions of our yachts allow us to visit less-accessible, picturesque ports and islands off the tourist trail, for a more intimate experience.

Picture a typical day on board: spend the morning sailing and taking in the glorious coastal vistas from a lounge on the sun deck. We anchor in a tranquil little bay, where you can enjoy a swim off the back of the yacht – as if it were your own. Relax back on board, absorbing the wonderful views over a delicious lunch, chatting with your fellow passengers about what lies in store at our next port of call. Join our included excursions ashore with free time after to explore. Enjoy dinner independently and sample the local fare before returning for a nightcap on the ship's terrace to watch the sunset.

A yacht cruise along the Adriatic offers the ultimate relaxing holiday experience that few will ever get to enjoy, and the memories of a special holiday that you'll treasure for a lifetime.



The island of Mljet

Explore idyllic islands and secluded coves along the stunning Adriatic coast



A CONVIVIAL ATMOSPHERE FOR 20 GUESTS

Feel like a VIP from the moment you step on board. Our stylish cabins are generously proportioned, and feature en-suite bathrooms and windows.

SHORE EXCURSIONS & EXPERT-LED TOURS

Our inspired itinerary includes fascinating tours with knowledgeable and engaging local guides. There's also free time to explore on your own.

RELAXED SAILING WITH SWIM STOPS

Enjoy plenty of time sailing between the picturesque islands and ports of the Adriatic, with frequent opportunities to swim in idyllic locations.

EXCELLENT DINING ON BOARD

Sample delicious Mediterranean cuisines in the yacht's restaurant. There are days when lunch or dinner is at leisure, so you can try the local restaurants ashore.



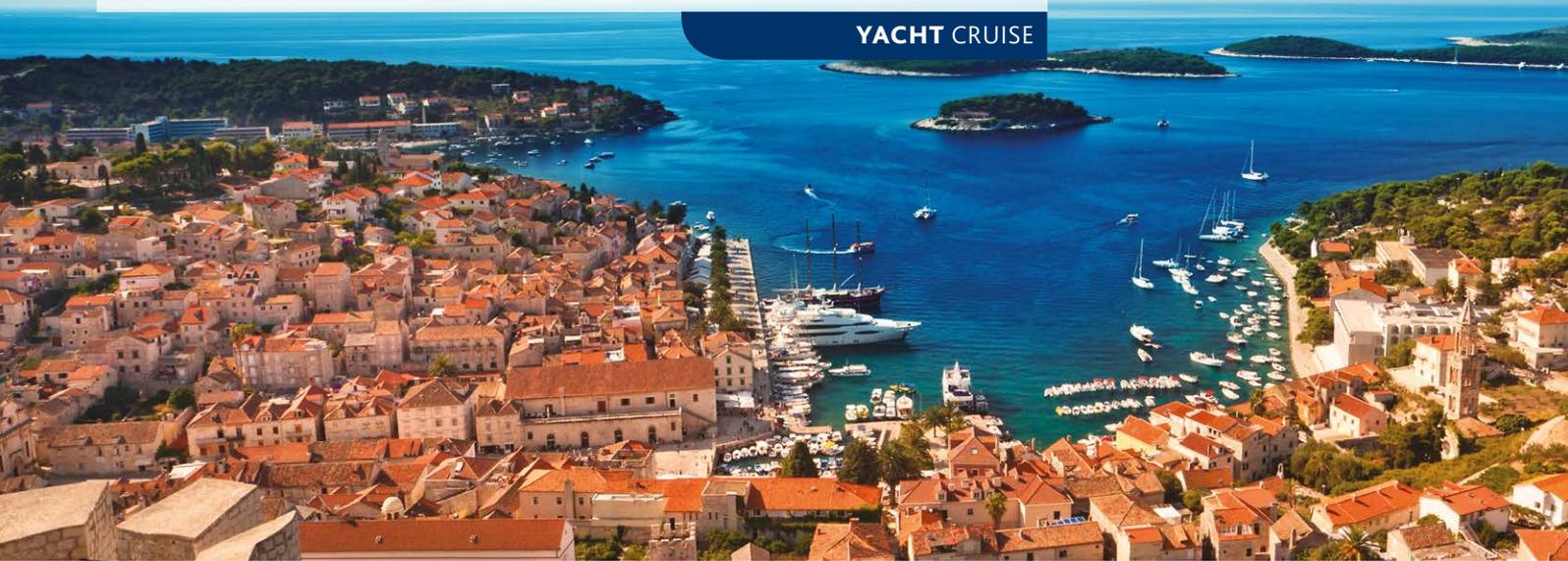
SPLIT, DUBROVNIK & THE SPLENDOURS OF DALMATIA

ON THE MS ADRIATIC SUN

8 days from only £2,299PP

May and August 2021

YACHT CRUISE



CRUISE SUMMARY

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN SPLIT

Arrive in Split and board your superb four-star ship, your home for the next seven nights.

DAY 2 - SPLIT & KORČULA

Enjoy a guided walking tour of historic Korčula, the birthplace of Marco Polo.

DAY 3 - KORČULA, MLJET & DUBROVNIK

Visit seductive Mljet island, the stunning national park and lovely St Mary's islet. In the evening, we moor in Dubrovnik.

DAY 4 - DUBROVNIK

Enjoy a guided tour of wonderful Dubrovnik, Pearl of the Adriatic, with free time to explore at leisure.

DAY 5 - DUBROVNIK & PELJEŠAC PENINSULA

We arrive at the pretty seaside village of Trstenik on the Pelješac Peninsula, famed for its excellent wines.

DAY 6 - PELJEŠAC PENINSULA & HVAR

Take a swim stop in one of the world's most beautiful stretches of water. After lunch, we enjoy a guided walking tour of scenic Hvar.

DAY 7 - HVAR, BRAČ & SPLIT

Enjoy a swim stop at Brač, an unspoilt island, before we return to historic Split for a guided walking tour of Diocletian's majestic palace. This evening, we enjoy the Captain's Dinner.

DAY 8 - RETURN FLIGHT

We disembark and transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.



Take in the superb views from the impressive fortress in Hvar



Trstenik



Korčula

PRICE INCLUDES

- Tour of Split and Emperor Diocletian's monumental palace
- Guided tour of Korčula, a perfectly preserved medieval port
- Visit the lovely seaside village of Trstenik
- Explore the stunningly beautiful islands of Hvar and Mljet
- Tour of Dubrovnik, Pearl of the Adriatic
- Swim stops in secluded idyllic island locations

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a choice of regional airports*
- 7 nights on the four-star MS Adriatic Sun, cruising the southern Dalmatian coast
- Daily breakfast, 5 lunches, 3 dinners plus the Captain's Dinner
- Services of our experienced tour manager
- Complimentary Wi-Fi on board
- All port charges, airport taxes, overseas transfers and portorage
- ABTA, ATOL and IATA protection

* a supplement may apply

FROM £2,279pp



Category B cabin



MS Adriatic Sun



Dining area



Brač

DAY 1 - ARRIVAL IN SPLIT

You'll arrive at the airport to take your flight to the Dalmatian capital, Split. On arrival in this historic city, you will be escorted to the harbour and your superb yacht cruiser, home for the next seven nights. The captain and crew will be on hand to welcome you and then, having settled into your comfortable cabin and surroundings, our adventure begins. For the rest of the day it's time to relax and get to know your fellow passengers – a maximum guest complement of just 19 in total. Perhaps you'll catch some rays on the sun deck or take a stroll ashore. It will soon be time for dinner and the ship's restaurant awaits. Perhaps later take an after-dinner stroll ashore in this most magical of cities.

DAY 2 - SPLIT - KORČULA

As you rise refreshed in the morning and enjoy a leisurely breakfast, you'll be delighted you chose this holiday. Our luxurious vessel, home for the next week and every inch the private yacht, slips out of the harbour and out to sea. Split soon fades into the distance but we will of course return at the end of our cruise. It is impossible for large cruise liners to visit the charming and almost deserted hamlets accessible to our smaller yacht cruiser. We will have time for a swim stop this morning before enjoying a delicious lunch on board, as stunning views of this spectacular coastline drift by and it's not long before we arrive into the historic town of Korčula. Ruled by the Venetians for 800 years, it is rather reminiscent of a much smaller Dubrovnik, with its host of tangled lanes so typical of medieval Mediterranean ports. The town is a charming small fortress, celebrated for supplying timber for the wooden walls of Venice and its harbour was a major shelter for the Venetian fleet. You'll find architectural

gems at every turn in its narrow cobbled streets. Famous for its artistic and musical traditions, Korčula has its own unique sword dance, the 'moreska', and a form of a capella singing, but is much more famous as the birthplace of the explorer Marco Polo. His house can still be visited, as can the All Saints museum with its glorious collection of Byzantine icons. After our guided walking tour, you are free to explore this beautiful town further. You take dinner at your leisure tonight.

DAY 3 - KORČULA - MJET - DUBROVNIK

The Dalmatian coastline is legendary: one of Europe's most dramatic, extending for hundreds of miles, where steep limestone cliffs plunge into sapphire-blue waters. The mirror-like Adriatic is studded with countless islands, some tiny, some large, some inhabited, some not. We arrive at Mljet, one of the most seductive of such islands, where the hillsides are clad in a green carpet of lush pine forests bringing that instantly recognisable Mediterranean aroma to the air. Nestling in picturesque coves are medieval fishing villages, refreshingly free from tasteless development, where the alleyways are simply pebbles set into the earth and overhead shutters sway precariously in the warm, gentle breezes.

Life here continues much as it has for centuries. This morning we go ashore to enjoy a tour of the stunning national park with a visit to the tiny islet of St Mary's with its 12th-century former Benedictine monastery. With its colourful walls and alter carved from local stone you will already feel a long way from home in this most atmospheric of places – it's easy to see why legend has it that the Greek hero Ulysses came here to contemplate. After lunch on board, there will be the

opportunity for a swim, then sit back, relax and enjoy the spectacular views as we cruise into the magical city of Dubrovnik. During tonight's dinner the ship will cruise alongside the ancient city walls before dropping anchor.

DAY 4 - DUBROVNIK

Awaking in this most magical of cities, after breakfast we take a guided tour of the old town; an independent city state for much of its history, it has evolved differently to the rest of Croatia. The city threw off its Venetian shackles during medieval times founding a commercial empire trading with the eastern Mediterranean, France, Spain and later the Ottoman Empire. As so often happened, the city began to reflect its resultant wealth and today this wonderfully Baroque city proudly nestles behind its huge imposing ramparts in a situation of outstanding natural beauty. The main avenue, lined by intimate cafés, is completely paved with gleaming marble, which dazzles in the sunlight and gives credence to the city's description as the 'Pearl of the Adriatic'. Throughout the city you will find a wonderful array of monasteries, beautifully decorated churches and civic buildings dating from the 14th-century. The guided walking tour encompasses all this and more, after which you are free to explore as you wish. Back on board this evening, enjoy another delicious dinner in this most beguiling of cities.

DAY 5 - DUBROVNIK - PELJEŠAC PENINSULA

Over breakfast this morning we say our fond farewells to Dubrovnik as the mighty walls of the old city slowly fade away into the hazy horizon. One of the huge delights of taking this kind of cruise, is that our ship can sail between the smaller islands, normally inaccessible



Dubrovnik

to the larger cruise liners, so you can experience fabulous coastal views in a much more intimate way. Sit back and relax over lunch on board and absorb the stunning coastal spectacle before you, as the sun glints on the crystal-clear waters. As we glide on past these truly beautiful seascapes, undiscovered beaches with secret coves and tiny traditional hamlets, unchanged for decades, we arrive at the pretty little seaside village of Trstenik on the Pelješac Peninsula. Nestled at the foot of the rolling hills behind, this picturesque, secluded spot is famed for its wine production where generations of families have produced excellent wines for hundreds of years. We remain moored overnight, so take dinner at your leisure in this charming spot, where you will feel like you are truly getting away from it all.

DAY 6 - PELJEŠAC PENINSULA - HVAR

After breakfast, you can take to the deck to see the spectacular coastland sliding by as this morning we cruise northwards. There will also be the opportunity for a swim stop here in one of the world's most beautiful stretches of water.

We lunch on board before disembarking this afternoon into the delightful and bewitching little town of Hvar in this enchanting archipelago. Wandering here is pure joy and remarkably, it's so compact and cosy, the streets don't even have names. With its freshwater springs, the island is unusually green, its hillsides boasting spectacular pine forests. Elsewhere you'll find olive groves, orchards and vineyards, the aromatic pleasures of the island exemplified by the delicate fragrance of abundant lavender fields. Hvar has been inhabited since Neolithic times; later, the ancient Greeks founded a colony here, and during the 14th-century, as the Venetian Empire extended



Explore charming Korčula, the birthplace of Marco Polo



Mljet



its influence, it became a major naval base. Also on the island's northern shores are some distinctive fortified 16th-century buildings, built to repel pirates and assaults by the Ottoman Empire. After exploring Hvar's agricultural, historical and cultural splendours on our guided walking tour, dine at leisure where you wish. The ship remains moored on the island overnight.

DAY 7 - HVAR - BRAČ - SPLIT

This morning's cruise brings us to Brač, the largest of the islands on this dramatic stretch of coastland; a typically Mediterranean landscape where its spectacular beaches give way to high pine forested uplands, and where a rich harvest of vines, olives and orange trees crowd the fertile valleys. Once dependent on its grape harvest, the island also relied heavily on the export of its stone – a mixture of marble and limestone – used in the construction of Diocletian's Palace but also of buildings as diverse as the White House in Washington to Berlin's Reichstag and closer to home, the high altar in Liverpool's cathedral. We head to the picturesque town of Bol and you might like to take the opportunity for a swim from the stunning beach.

During lunch back on board we cruise back into historic Split, principally famous for a single building, the Emperor Diocletian's huge palace, one of the

greatest structures of the Roman Empire. No expense was spared in its construction - the best Italian marble, with columns and sphinxes from Egypt. But what makes this palace so astonishing is that during medieval times it was fully integrated into the town's fabric with a jumble of buildings grafted on to and inside it. This means, for example, the Temple of Jupiter became a baptistry. It's all the more fascinating that today 3,000 people still live here. You will find surprises at every turn: there are tall medieval buildings lining the streets, buttressed by unmistakably Roman columns. We have a guided walking tour of this fascinating complex which has recently been used as the setting of the TV spectacular 'Game of Thrones'.

By the time you have breathed in the atmosphere and history of this glorious part of the coast, it's time to relax back on board as the chef presents the Captain's Dinner – a delicious selection of Croatian and Mediterranean specialities. Later the bar awaits for a digestif and the chance to reflect on treasured memories of this wonderful journey with newly made friends.

DAY 8 - RETURN FLIGHT

After breakfast we disembark and return to the airport at the appropriate time.

SPLIT, RAB & UNDISCOVERED ISLANDS OF THE NORTH

ON THE MS IL MARE

8 days from only £2,499PP

May and July 2021

YACHT CRUISE



CRUISE SUMMARY

DAY 1 – ARRIVAL IN SPLIT

Arrive in Split and board the superb four-star MS Il Mare, your floating home for the next seven nights.

DAY 2 – SPLIT, TROGIR & VODICE

This morning enjoy a guided walk through Trogir, featuring winding medieval streets and imposing 15th-century walls. Later this afternoon we arrive in picturesque Vodice.

DAY 3 – VODICE & ZADAR

Relax as you cruise along the Adriatic Coast to Zadar, the ancient capital of Dalmatia. A guided tour introduces you to its Roman ruins and medieval churches.

DAY 4 – ZADAR & RAB

Continue cruising north, stopping in one of the bays for a swim, before stepping ashore for free time in the charming town of Rab.

DAY 5 – RAB, SILBA OR OLIB & SALI

Enjoy a swim stop at one of the islands of Silba or Olib. Later this afternoon we arrive at the historic fishing town of Sali, fringed by ancient olive groves. This evening take your seat for the Captain's Dinner.

DAY 6 – TELAŠČICA, KORNATI & ŠIBENIK

We call at Telašćica, a natural harbour with sheer limestone cliffs and a large salt lake, before cruising through the stunning Kornati National Park. Later we arrive at Šibenik for a guided tour of this delightful town.

DAY 7 – ŠIBENIK & SPLIT

Spend a leisurely morning on-board as we return to historic Split. This afternoon discover the magnificent ruins of the Diocletian's Palace during a guided walking tour.

DAY 8 – RETURN FLIGHT

Today we disembark and transfer to the airport for your return flight to the UK.



Wander the winding, medieval streets of Trogir



Šibenik



Split



PRICE INCLUDES

- Guided tour of Trogir with its maze of winding medieval streets
- Guided tour of Šibenik's delightful old town
- Guided tour of Zadar, the ancient capital of Dalmatia
- Cruise through Kornati National Park
- Guided tour of Split and the astonishing Emperor Diocletian's Palace

Plus, of course...

- Return flights from a choice of regional airports*
- 7 nights on board the four-star MS Il Mare in your choice of cabin
- Daily breakfast, six lunches, one dinner plus the Captain's Dinner
- Services of our experienced tour manager
- Complimentary Wi-Fi on board
- All port charges, airport taxes, overseas transfers and portorage
- ABTA and ATOL protection

* a supplement may apply

FROM £2,479pp



Vodice



Telašćica



Rab

DAY 1 – SPLIT

You'll arrive at the airport to take your flight to Split, where you'll be met and taken by coach to the stunning MS Il Mare, moored in the picturesque, ancient harbour. The professional crew welcome you on board and will be on hand to help you settle in. The rest of the day is free to relax in your comfortable cabin or wander ashore and begin exploring this fascinating city. It's soon time for dinner in the ship's stylish restaurant and a chance to meet your fellow travelling companions; with just 40 guests in total, a relaxed, uncrowded ambience pervades the ship so after dinner, retire to a comfy armchair on the terrace for a nightcap and contemplate all that lies in store tomorrow!

DAY 2 – SPLIT, TROGIR & VODICE

As the mellow morning sun peeks above the northern hills and casts its sleepy early shadows over this intriguing city, you rise refreshed and ready for a first fortifying breakfast on board. Expectation mounts as we cast off and our adventure begins! Head up on deck and take in the glorious views; the Dalmatian coastline is said to be one of the most spectacular in Europe with its vast stretches of deserted beach, secret coves and pretty, secluded bays. We soon arrive in Trogir where we head ashore to enjoy a guided tour of this delightful city; behind its classic waterfront, an intriguing maze of winding medieval streets is revealed, tightly clasped by the imposing 15th-century city walls. At the heart of the old town you'll find the majestic cathedral, a Venetian masterpiece with its richly decorated chapel. We return to the ship where a lovely buffet lunch awaits!

Relax in your cabin this afternoon or enjoy a refreshing cup of tea on the terrace as the MS Il Mare gracefully enters the picturesque harbour at Vodice. Once a fishing village, this bustling town offers a good choice of restaurants and cafés, so wander ashore this evening and take dinner perhaps on the waterfront, before watching the sun go down over a glass of fiery locally distilled brandy.

DAY 3 – VODICE & ZADAR

We spend a leisurely day on board today; during breakfast we cast off once more heading out into the glistening Adriatic. This magnificent coast is littered with idyllic bays where the calm water is perfect for swimming, so during our cruising this morning we'll make time for a refreshing swim stop, allowing you to work up an appetite for our on-board lunch! Later, venture up on deck and absorb the best panoramic views from the comfort of a sun lounger. As we sail northwards, there's chance for a spot of reading perhaps or simply unwind to the sound of gulls soaring high above, with a long refreshing drink from the bar whilst the coastal views drifts by, and the mesmerising waters of the Adriatic dazzle under the warm rays of a hazy afternoon sun – now you're really on holiday!

Later we arrive in the ancient capital of Dalmatia, Zadar. This bustling coastal town with the style and charm of the Italian Riviera, was for centuries ruled by the Venetians. There's time for a fascinating guided tour around its marble streets, discovering Roman ruins and lovely medieval churches before you are free to explore under your own steam. Dinner is at

leisure tonight so why not try one of the many cosy restaurants with simple appetising menus of grilled meats or freshly caught fish. Perhaps end the evening with a glass of maraschino, a local cherry liqueur produced here since the 16th century.

DAY 4 – ZADAR & RAB

This morning we continue our smooth passage northwards as the passing seascapes continue to enchant; we sail past the fascinatingly barren rocky island of Pag, its desolate landscape defined by its stark steely mountain backdrop. There's time for a refreshing swim stop before a delicious lunch on board. Later we arrive in Rab, a real gem and one of the most alluring islands along this stretch of the Dalmatian coast. Sheltered against its sturdy mountainous spine, a verdant landscape of lush fragrant pine forest and a fertile patchwork of vine and olive groves gives way to golden ribbons of deserted beach and picturesque coves along this strikingly beautiful peninsula. Four colourful lofty bell towers rise up from the blaze of terracotta rooftops below. Spend some free time wandering in the cool shadows of Rab's ancient stone buildings, admiring the Romanesque architecture, the grand Italianate houses - a legacy of Venetian rule, and absorbing the magical atmosphere of this charming town. Dinner is at leisure again this evening so you might opt to try one of the stylish seafood restaurants tucked away in the old town, serving the catch of the day - simply fried with white wine, garlic and herbs and washed down with a glass of local chilled white wine. What could be better!

Marvel at Kornati National Park's fascinating islands



DAY 5 RAB, SILBA OR OLIB & SALI

After a relaxed breakfast, we commence our southerly course into the crystal waters of the Kvarner Gulf. Up on deck take in yet more spectacular vistas as we drift between these romantically desolate islands. We drop anchor at Silba or Olib, to enjoy a refreshing swim stop in one of these islands' pretty little bays and then it's time for lunch on board. This afternoon take to the deck once more for a lazy afternoon's cruising – perhaps indulge in a little nap, lulled by the soft breezes of the maestral.

Later, we idle into port at Sali, on Dugi Otek, (literally Long Island). Fringed by ancient olive groves, this Croatian fishing town boasts a thousand-year history and will be our mooring for tonight.

As the sun begins to cast its rosy glow, thoughts turn to tonight's special Captain's Dinner, during which a selection of regional specialities will be served. Later, sink into a comfy armchair on the terrace, sipping your favourite digestif, and reflect on all that you have seen so far and what's still to come.

DAY 6 – TELAŠČICA, KORNATI & ŠIBENIK

Another day dawns and you rise refreshed as we continue our southerly course, firstly calling at Telašćica, one of the largest and most beautiful natural harbours in the Adriatic – largely uninhabited, this is a stunningly rugged stretch of coastline backed by sheer limestone cliffs that plummet into the sea, flanked by a scattering of pretty islets and islands, home to numerous plant and bird species such as rare peregrine falcons. During our stop here, you'll have opportunity to wander to the shores of Lake Mir, a natural salt lake, with its warm, supposedly therapeutic water that channels through the limestone on its way out to sea.

Later this morning, have your camera at the ready as we are soon entering the waters of the breathtaking Kornati archipelago; an explosion of numerous fascinating desert-like islands lie scattered around the central island of Kornat. George Bernard Shaw wrote that [God] 'created the Kornati Islands out of tears, stars and breath' and there is certainly something ethereal about their distinctive barren beauty. In fact, this remarkable region was designated a National Park in 1980, in celebration of its extraordinarily unusual and desolate charm. The Kornati Islands hide a multitude of secret caves and grottoes amongst the rugged cliffs. Our Captain will drop anchor to allow a swim stop this morning, so enjoy a cooling dip before lunch again on board.

Later we arrive at the little port of Šibenik, where our guided tour reveals more about the history of this delightful town as we wander its medieval streets, seeing the beautifully restored Renaissance town hall and remarkable Gothic cathedral, thought to be the world's largest church built without brick or wood supports. This evening the MS Il Mare remains moored in Šibenik. Dinner is at leisure tonight so wander ashore and seek out some traditional Croatian fare: hearty fish stew or mouth-wateringly tender slow cooked beef, simmered with wine and prunes, with fresh crusty bread baked 'under the lid' – a typical Croatian style of cooking. Sit back and soak in the magical ambience of historic Šibenik.

DAY 7 – ŠIBENIK & SPLIT

The end of our cruise is in sight so make sure you make the most of our last scenic morning on board, whilst watching the coastal views float by. We enjoy one last swim stop before commencing our journey to Split once again. Later after a final lunch on board, the stunning city skyline appears and we begin our final approach into this unique historic capital.

Croatia's second city, Split, is one of its most vibrant and alluring. At its core lie the huge ancient ruins of



Zadar



Rab

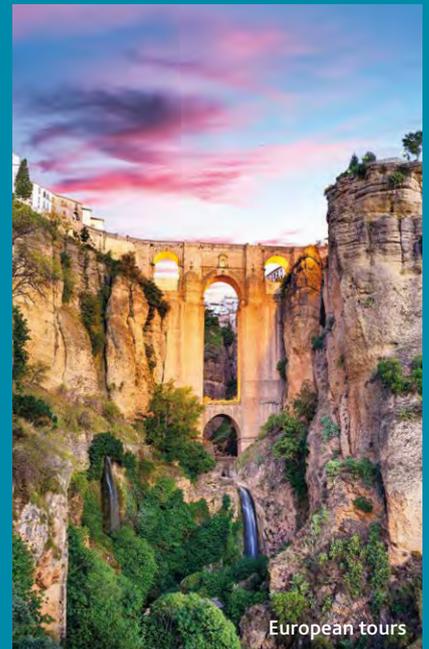
the Emperor Diocletian's Palace, undoubtedly one of the most exceptional legacies from the city's Roman past and more recently used as the setting for the globally successful television drama *Game of Thrones*. A building constructed with the finest materials, Italian marble, lustrous local limestone, even sphinxes from Egypt, the whole palace complex occupied over 30,000 square metres, surrounded by towering walls, two metres thick and over 25 metres in places! During medieval times, other buildings were grafted on to it, integrating the palace with the rest of the town and creating the quirky jumble of houses, churches, chapels

and other buildings seen today. We will have a guided walking tour, seeing all the major sights and learning more about this city's glorious past before you have some free time to wander. Dinner is at leisure tonight so you might choose to return to the alluring tangle of streets in the old town for some delicious local cuisine whilst absorbing the magical ambience of this beguiling city.

DAY 8 – SPLIT

After breakfast, we disembark from the MS Il Mare and return to the airport at the appropriate time.

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