

NOBLE CALEDONIA

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CIRCUMNAVIGATION OF HOKKAIDO

AN AUTUMNAL EXPLORATION OF JAPAN'S REMOTE
ISLAND WILDERNESS ABOARD THE MS ISLAND SKY

16TH OCTOBER TO 2ND NOVEMBER 2021



Hokkaido, Japan's northernmost and least developed island is often considered by the Japanese to be the country's last frontier and is a world away from the traditional view of Japan. Only colonised by Japan in the past 150 years, we won't find a land of ancient temples and shrines or developed cities with skyscrapers during our visit, but what the island lacks in regard to 21st century development, it more than makes up for in natural wonders with large swathes of wild, open spaces, primeval forests, crystal clear lakes, active volcanoes and bubbling hot springs.

Our exploration begins with the bright neon lights of Tokyo where the cityscape of skyscrapers is interspersed with ancient temples and scenic gardens. Before reaching the enchanting island of Hokkaido we spend some time on the north coast of Honshu island visiting the Feudal town of Hirosaki and the spectacular Towada Hachimantai National Park.

Our circumnavigation of Hokkaido then commences and during our time on this remarkable island, we will explore nature trails, watch for wildlife in the national parks, learn more of the indigenous Ainu people and hopefully see the stunning autumnal foliage which should coincide with our visit. More than two million acres on Hokkaido are dedicated to national parkland and we will visit some of the most remarkable including the Shiretoko National Park located on the north eastern tip of the island and which in Ainu means 'end of the world'. UNESCO has called it one of the richest integrated ecosystems in the world and in 2005 designated it as a World Heritage Site. We will have a full day to explore the national park, home to brown bears, Yezo sika deer and red fox whilst birders can keep an eye out for Steller sea eagles, Blakiston fish owl and white-tailed eagles. Whilst in the Kushiro Marshlands we visit the home of Hokkaido's resident red-crowned cranes, Japan's iconic bird, known as the bird of happiness.

Helping us understand all we will see and experience, and travelling with us throughout the voyage, will be our expert naturalist, our knowledgeable Guest Speaker and three Japanese guides, all adding immeasurably to your enjoyment and understanding of this fascinating country. We hope you can join us for this rare circumnavigation of Japan's most enchanting isle aboard the all-suite MS Island Sky.



The Itinerary

Day 1 London to Tokyo, Japan. Fly by scheduled flight.

Day 2 Tokyo. Arrive today and transfer to our hotel for a two night stay. The remainder of the day is free to relax and explore at your own pace before we meet for dinner this evening.

Day 3 Tokyo. After breakfast in the hotel we will make our way to the Meiji Shrine which is dedicated to the deified spirit of Emperor Meiji and a popular place for traditional Japanese weddings. Surrounded by over 100,000 trees, Meiji is an oasis

of serenity and spirituality in a city that never sleeps. We will then visit the Nezu Museum which exhibits an excellent collection of Japanese and East Asian art. Hidden away in its spacious forest-like garden you will find ponds, stone lanterns and several tea houses. The afternoon and evening are free to relax in the hotel or explore independently.

Day 4 Tokyo to Aomori. After breakfast we will transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to Aomori. On arrival transfer to the port where we will embark the MS Island Sky. Tonight enjoy

welcome drinks and dinner as we moor overnight.

Day 5 Aomori & Oirase Gorge. Today we will head inland to the spectacular Towada Hachimantai National Park which involves a scenic drive through the Kayano plateau and Hakkoda mountains to the scenic Oirase Valley and Lake Towada, a magnificent ancient caldera lake surrounded by deciduous forests. The scenery is stunning, especially as the hillsides change to red and orange. We will wander the trails at the Tsuta Nana-numa Ponds, a collection of

seven lakes which are surrounded by a forest of Japanese Beech trees before continuing to Oirase Gorge. The gorge runs for 14 kilometres from Lake Towada to Yakeyama and we will walk alongside the crystal clear Oirase Stream seeing the beautiful scenery, autumn foliage and waterfalls. After lunch we return to the ship in Aomori or alternatively enjoy some free time in the city, visit the market, try the locally caught sushi or view the crafts and local produce at the A factory. We remain berthed overnight in Aomori for anyone who wishes to take an after dinner stroll or dine ashore.



Oirase gorge



Steller sea eagle



Lamp, Meiji Shrine



Red-crowned crane



Kakunodate

Day 6 Hirosaki. We can immerse ourselves in Japanese history and culture as we visit the former Feudal town of Hirosaki which was the political capital of the region in the Edo Period. During a tour of the city we will see the small, three storey castle which was the focal point of the old city and the base of the powerful Tsugaru Clan. Surrounding the castle was the samurai and merchant district where we can visit the preserved houses and the Fujita Kinen Teien, a Japanese landscape garden built in 1919. After a local lunch, we spend the afternoon visiting Neputa Mura Museum showcasing the crafts of the area and dedicated to the annual Neputa festival held in August. Return to the ship and sail this evening.

Day 7 Mutoran. We will spend our morning around the Shikotsu-Toya National Park, named after the two caldera lakes which offer wonderful scenery and excellent hiking and walking opportunities. This is still an active area and a geological wonder with the volcano Showa Shin-zan only created in the 1940s. Our day will be flexible around the weather but if clear we may take the cable car to the top of Mount Usu for the wonderful views to Lake Toya or visit Jigokudani, 'Hell Valley', a steaming lunar like valley of steam vents and sulphurous streams formed over 10,000 years ago. Return to the ship for lunch and spend the afternoon at leisure in Mutoran, maybe visit the scenic cape and lighthouse or if feeling active you may wish to walk

up Mount Sokuryo offering views to the city below.

Day 8 Kushiro. After a morning at sea we arrive in Kushiro over lunch. This afternoon we will visit Kushiro Marshlands, Japan's largest wetland and marsh habitat and home to the only known population of Japan's sacred red-crowned cranes. The cranes were thought to have been made extinct due to overhunting and habitat destruction. However, in 1926 a group of 20 birds were discovered in this area and with conservation efforts now number more than 1000. We will visit the Kushiro Onnenai Visitor Centre with displays of the flora and fauna of the region and views over the marshlands before taking the walking trails where we hope to see the cranes and birds in their natural habitat. Continue to the Kushiro Crane Reserve, which was created 60 years ago to protect and preserve the crane population and continues to rescue injured birds whilst also breeding and releasing young birds into the wild. We remain in Kushiro overnight for anyone wishing to explore ashore this evening.

Day 9 Lake Akan. This morning we will drive inland to see one of the most scenic lakes of Hokkaido. Arriving at Lake Akan we will board one of the local boats for a cruise, providing the perfect vantage point to the colourful forests lining the banks with views up to the surrounding volcanos of Me-Akan

and O-Akan. The lake is also famous for marimo, an aggregation of algae which forms into balls and is unique to this lake. During our cruise we will pass by Takiguchi, one of the most beautiful spots on the lake as well as visit the observation centre on Churui Island. After lunch we will walk to Akanko Ainu Kotan, where we will be able to see the traditional crafts and dance and learn about the culture of the indigenous Ainu people of Hokkaido before returning to the MS Island Sky this afternoon and sailing.

Day 10 Abashiri. Spend the morning on deck as we sail in the Nemuro Channel and around the Shiretoko Peninsula where we will keep an eye out for wildlife on land and in the water. Arriving in Abashiri at lunchtime we spend the afternoon learning more about the Ainu culture, clothing, legends and crafts at the Hokkaido Museum of Northern Peoples which also provides insight into the cultures and traditions of the peoples inhabiting the sub-Arctic regions of the globe including Inuit and Sami. Afterwards we travel the short distance to the Okhotsk Sea Ice Museum which offers insight into the sea ice that surrounds the city during the winter. Return to the MS Island Sky for dinner and spend the evening moored in Abashiri.

Day 11 Abashiri & Shiretoko National Park. From our berth we will make a full day excursion to the Shiretoko National Park which

covers the majority of the Shiretoko Peninsula and is a UNESCO World Heritage Site due to the diversity of its ecosystems. This remote and untouched park combines rivers, forests, mountains and waterfalls and is home to an array of wildlife including brown bears, Yezo sika deer and red fox. If weather permits, we will take the Shiretoko Pass offering stunning views of the autumn leaves on Mount Rausu. Continue to the Shiretoko Nature Centre where we can learn about the wildlife of the park. Here there will be a choice of either a long or short walk through the wilderness on the lookout for wildlife, autumnal colours and views of the lakes. Return to the ship via the Oshin Koshin Waterfall.

Day 12 Korsakov, Russia. Arrive this morning at Korsakov where we will clear into Russia. Once the formalities are concluded we will explore part of this city which was founded in 1853 as Sakhalin's first Russian military post. From here we drive to Yuzhno-Sakhalinsk, the capital of the island with a population of just over 160,000. Founded as a small Russian settlement in the 1880s, the city became a Japanese prefect capital when the southern half of Sakhalin was declared a Japanese colony in 1905; after World War II it was returned to Russia. Highlights include a visit to the Russian Orthodox Church, the Regional Museum housed in an impressive former Japanese mansion, and the



bustling market. Return to the ship this afternoon as we return to Japanese waters.

Day 13 Rishiri Island. We will clear customs formalities in Wakkanai before sailing into the Rishiri-Rebun-Sarobetsu National Park and berth at Rishiri Island where the skyline is dominated by the dormant volcano of Mount Rishiri, which climbs to 1721 metres. An island tour will include the beautiful autumnal scenery at Himenuma Pond and Kutsugata Cape Park whilst we hope to see black woodpecker during a walk at the Forest Park. There will also be free time to explore the town or take time to visit the hot springs.

Day 14 Otaru & Sapporo. From our berth in Otaru we visit Hokkaido's capital city of Sapporo where we enjoy a tour of the famous brewery. Hokkaido is the birthplace of beer in Japan and it has been brewed in Sapporo since 1877. A tour of the museum will introduce the history of the industry and includes a tasting. Also visit Takino Suzaran, a huge park on the outskirts of the city and a must visit location in autumn. We will take walks along the trails through the woodlands, one of which will take you to the lovely Ashiribetsu Waterfall. Return to the ship for lunch and enjoy a relaxing afternoon at sea.

Day 15 Hakodate. Our final day in Hokkaido will be at the southern port of Hakodate. We will make

our way to Onuma Park, on the outskirts of the city and known for its picturesque, island-dotted lakes and majestic dormant volcano, Mount Komagatake. We have the option to take a series of walks around the lake's peninsulas and islands, several of which are connected with each other by small bridges and surrounded by colourful birch and maple forests. Return to the ship for lunch and this afternoon either relax on board or join a city tour including the 19th century Fort Goryokaku, built as a citadel but now a public park.

Day 16 Akita. Spend the day in the Akita Prefecture, known for its rice farming, traditional festivals, and treasured dog breed of the same name. This morning we will drive inland to Kakunodate which was established in 1620 by the Lords of Akita as a military outpost with a castle built on Mount Furishiroyama. Two distinct areas were then developed, one for samurai and the other for merchants. Today it remains one of the best examples of a castle town in Japan and the Uchimachi samurai quarter maintains a number of the original wooden houses and well-maintained gardens which we can explore. The afternoon is free to explore Akita. At the centre lies Senshu Park, built from the ruins of Kubota Castle, a former samurai fortress. Lotus flowers now fill the remnants of old moats and

tree-lined walking trails lead to its watchtower, temple and shrine. You may also wish to visit the Akita Museum of Art which includes a large collection of work by Fujita Tsuguharu including his giant 'Annual Events in Akita' mural.

Day 17 Niigata to Tokyo. Disembark this morning and transfer to the train station to board our Shinkansen service to Tokyo. A lunch box will be provided on the train before we arrive in Tokyo and transfer to our hotel for some free time before we meet for dinner this evening.

Day 18 Tokyo to London. After breakfast in the hotel we transfer to the airport for our scheduled flight to London.

Please note: The autumn colours are a natural phenomenon and sightings are not guaranteed. We have timed our journey to meet the traditional times for the changing colours in Hokkaido and Aomori but are too early to see the colours in Tokyo.

PRICES PER PERSON

Based on double occupancy

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

Deck	Suite Category	Brochure Price	Special Offer Price
Magellan	Standard	£9295	£8995
Columbus	Superior	£9495	£9195
Marco Polo	Premium	£9695	£9395
Marco Polo	Corner	£9995	£9695
Erikson	Deluxe Balcony	£10495	£10195
Explorer	Owner's Balcony Suites	£10795	£10495
Explorer	Island Suite	£11995	£11695
Magellan	Standard for sole use	£13295	£12995
Columbus	Superior for sole use	£13495	£13195

PRICE INCLUDES: Economy class scheduled air travel • Three nights hotel accommodation in Tokyo with breakfast • 13 nights aboard the MS Island Sky on a full board basis • Wine, beer & soft drinks with lunch and dinner • Shore excursions • Bullet train from Niigata to Tokyo • Noble Caledonia onboard team • Dinner on days 2 & 17 • Transfers • Gratuities • Group Visa for Russia • Port taxes.

Not Included: Travel insurance.

MS ISLAND SKY



Friendly Service



Owner's Balcony Suite



The Club

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

Your Suite

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

Your Dining

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



Standard Suite



The Restaurant



The Library

Your Space

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

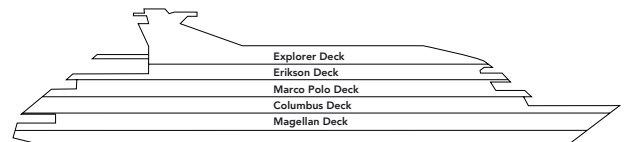
Your Comfort

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

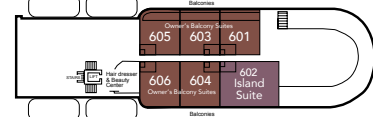
Your Life On Board

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

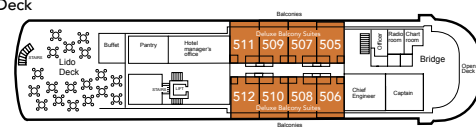
MS ISLAND SKY DECK PLAN



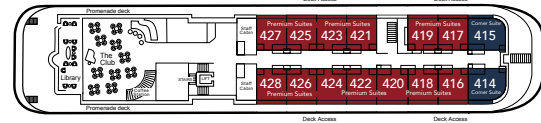
Explorer Deck



Erikson Deck



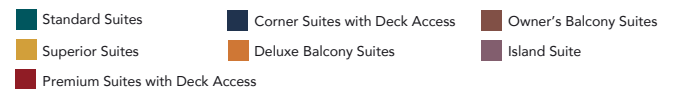
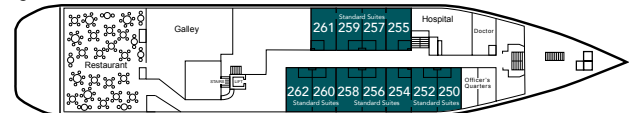
Marco Polo Deck



Columbus Deck



Magellan Deck



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