

WHAT'S NEW

Nine exciting new itineraries for 2024

FROM A FRONT ROW SEAT AT ONE OF THE WORLD'S MOST ACTIVE GLACIERS TO EXHILARATING VOYAGES TO THE FURTHEST REACH OF FRENCH POLYNESIA, HERE ARE SOME OF THE MOST EXCITING CRUISES FOR 2024 AND BEYOND. WORDS: JEANNINE WILLIAMSON

1 Experience the Austral Islands on a unique ship

Discover the southernmost archipelago in French Polynesia with Aranui Cruises. It's the only line to visit the Austral Islands, which lie 400 miles from the Tahitian capital of Papeete, where the 11-day voyage begins and ends. Visit all five inhabited isles in the archipelago of seven volcanic islands ringed with coral reefs. Far-flung Rapa, 325 miles from its nearest neighbour and with a population of just 467, sits in an idyllic lagoon inside a crater and can only be reached by ship. On board, expect a wealth of ukulele and craft classes, plus a resident tattooist for anyone wanting a permanent reminder of their trip. Celebrating its 40th anniversary in 2024, Aranui is the longest-serving line in French Polynesia and its ship *Aranui 5* — an unusual hybrid cargo and passenger vessel — is as much a talking point as the itinerary. Sails on 30 March and 2 November 2024, from €5,209 (£4,555) cruise-only with a 50% discount for a second passenger and no single supplement for solo travellers. aranui.com

2 Dive into pristine New Zealand waters

In response to a surge in demand for tailor-made private group travel, tour operator Black Tomato has introduced exclusive and once-in-a-lifetime See You in the Moment (SYITM) experiences. These trips include a new sailing trip around New Zealand's isolated Poor Knights Islands on a privately chartered sustainable motor yacht affiliated with the ocean conservation charity Live Ocean. Sleeping up to eight people in four cabins, the yacht sails from Auckland via Great Barrier Island to the clear subtropical waters, deep sea caves and mesmerising ecosystem, once described by legendary French explorer Jacques Cousteau as one of the top 10 dive sites in the world. Divers will not only be rewarded by otherworldly beauty, but will be sharing space with dolphins and orcas. Then spend evenings stargazing at clear night skies devoid of any light pollution. A five-night bespoke sailing, October 2024 onwards, from £20,500 cruise-only. blacktomato.com

3 Visit the Seychelles & Madagascar

Watch the seascape from above and below on Ponant's luxury exploration ship *Le Dumont-d'Urville*, on the Seychelles to Madagascar voyage. The ship has an innovative Blue Eye underwater observation lounge, which transports travellers beneath the sea to the islands and atolls of the Seychelles and Madagascar. Embark in Mahé, in the Seychelles, and spend the next 11 days sailing to Nosy Be in the Mozambique Channel, near the northwestern coast of Madagascar. Naturalists accompany shore tours, which include national marine parks such as Curieuse, where the resident colony of Aldabra giant tortoises are a big draw. Last stop in the Seychelles is Farquhar, the southernmost atoll, renowned for its towering sand dunes and shimmering lagoon. The itinerary now features Madagascar's Diego Suarez, a paradise for divers and hikers. Look out for endemic species such as the brookesia micra, one of the world's smallest chameleons. Sails on 28 November 2024, from €6,200 (£5,415), including flights. ponant.com

Clockwise from top: Bora Bora, French Polynesia; a lighthouse on the northern tip of Madagascar in Antsiranana; a school of blue maomao fish swim in the Poor Knights islands, New Zealand

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IMAGES: GETTY

From left: Huge icebergs lining the shores of the town of Qeqertarsuaq on the south coast of Disko Island, west Greenland; a Patagonian fjords cruise in the Alberto de Agostini National Park in Chile

4 Explore US National Parks

US small ship specialist American Cruise Lines' new programme for 2024 will take passengers into the heart of iconic national parks. The Grand Alaska National Parks itinerary between Fairbanks and Juneau features an 18-day Alaska tour, with cruising in Glacier Bay National Park, the Inside Passage and Frederick Sound, and a week-long guided exploration of Denali and Kenai Fjords National Parks. Staying inland, there's a 12-day Great Smoky Mountains National Park sailing on the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers, between Knoxville and Nashville in Tennessee. On another new land and water combination tour, modern-day adventurers can spend nine days following the journey of 19th-century pioneers Meriwether Lewis and William Clark along the lesser-known Snake and Columbia rivers, followed by a week visiting Glacier, Yellowstone, and Grand Teton National Parks. Departures between June and September 2024, from \$12,455 (£9,940) cruise-only. americancruiselines.com

5 Marvel at glaciers in Greenland

The all-new, 13-day adventure with Wildfoot Travel offers the best of both worlds with an expedition cruise around west Greenland along with a two-night stay in a lodge. Guests will be cruising aboard the sturdy *M/S Balto*, which carries just 12 passengers in outside cabins and provides a much more intimate Greenland experience compared with large expedition vessels. The round-trip sailing from Ilulissat in west Greenland visits volcanic Disko Island and includes a hike to learn about its geology and lush vegetation, and settlements such as Niaqornat, which has a population of around just 50 and is nicknamed 'the village at the end of the world'. The journey ends with a lodge stay showcasing unforgettable views of Egi Glacier, one of the world's most active glaciers, which calves several times an hour. Passengers may even get to spot seals and whales along the way. Sails on 26 June 2024, from £11,695 cruise-only. wildfoottravel.com

6 Sail to Patagonia & the Chilean fjords

Paddle a kayak on one of the world's most famous waterways, the Strait of Magellan, on this fascinating sailing with Viking. During the 13-day trip from Santiago to Ushuaia, which also takes in tiny Patagonian enclaves Puerto Chacabuco along the way, follow in the wake of the namesake pioneering Portuguese explorer who discovered the narrow sea passage at the southern tip of the Americas in 1520. Travelling with a team of naturalists, scientists and experts on Viking's modern expedition ship, *Viking Polaris*, guests will gain an in-depth insight into the glaciers and wilderness as they delve into the rugged and unblemished region. Back on dry land, highlights include a visit to a Patagonian farm to learn first-hand about the lives and work of the Chilean sheep farmers that settled in these distant lands. Sails on 8 November 2024, from £9,495, all-inclusive, including flights. viking.com



7 See natural spectacles in Kimberley, Australia

Luxury cruise line Seabourn makes its first foray into Western Australia's sparsely settled northern Kimberley region with some of the first voyages on the new *Seabourn Pursuit*. Carrying two submersibles, kayaks and a 24-strong expedition team, the cruise visits the dramatic sandstone karsts of the Bungle Bungle Range formed by ancient sea beds, and King George Falls, Western Australia's highest twin waterfalls. The sailing will also take in the surging Horizontal Falls at Talbot Bay, described by David Attenborough as one of the world's greatest natural wonders. Cabin categories on *Seabourn Pursuit* include the new two-storey Grand Wintergarden Suites. These rooms feature double height windows for wildlife-spotting and a bar with a bottle of Shackleton Blended Malt Scotch Whisky, based on the spirit supplied to the 1907 British Antarctic Expedition. Six departures between 12 June and 1 August 2024, from £8,899 cruise-only. seabourn.com

8 Discover the cultures of Northern Peru

Sail on a cultural expedition cruise in South America on Swan Hellenic's new ship *SH Diana*. Visiting destinations from Lima to Panama City, it's the first time the 192-passenger vessel will sail in this region. The 10-day Cultures of Northern Peru and Biodiversity voyage provides an incredible way to get close-up views of wildlife including Humboldt penguins and southern sea lions on Isla Guanape; Peruvian pelicans and blue-footed boobies on Lobos de Tierra; some of the 130 species of hummingbird on Puerto Bolívar; and nested waved albatross on Isla de la Plata. The expedition also offers the opportunity to meet the Indigenous Emberá people in the depths of the Darien jungle. The itinerary includes a lecture programme by expedition team members and guest speakers, and *SH Diana* is equipped with both sturdy tender boats and Zodiacs for shore excursions. Sails on 18 March 2024, from £5,356 cruise-only including a one night pre-cruise hotel stay. swanhellenic.com

9 Cruise to captivating Costa Rica

Rainforest Cruises' new Costa Rica voyage combines upmarket and sustainable sailing along the Pacific coastline with trips to protected eco-reserves. Costa Rica is an unexplored paradise for yachting and you can sail in style on the 18-passenger *Kontiki Wayra*, the only water-based member of Small Luxury Hotels of the World. The five- and eight-day itineraries will appeal to environmentally conscious travellers who don't want to sacrifice luxury — the yacht even has a hot tub and wine cellar. It's been designed using organic eco-friendly materials and showcases work from local artists. Cabins have rugs made from recycled plastic bottles and blankets hand-woven by artisans from Costa Rica. Itineraries have been curated to offer an exciting sea adventure with visits to small villages to connect passengers to local communities. Sails from January to May 2024 from \$7,479 (£6,025) cruise-only. rainforestcruises.com □

Above: The beach village of Samara in Costa Rica

IMAGE: GETTY