

Small Ship Adventure Co.

Specialising in Small Ship Cruising Worldwide



SENEGAL TO SPAIN

WITH CAPE VERDE, CANARY ISLANDS & MOROCCO

Aboard the Clipper Odyssey

April 22 – May 6, 2012

ITINERARY

Sunday, April 22, 2012

Depart

Depart on your independent overnight flight.

Monday, April 23

Dakar, Senegal

Arrive in Dakar, Africa's westernmost city, in the early morning where you will be met and transferred to our hotel for breakfast and the morning at leisure. After lunch an afternoon tour of Dakar offers an up-close look at the highlights of this energetic, eclectic, and cosmopolitan capital city including the stunning Great Mosque, handsome French colonial buildings, and President's Palace. We also visit the picturesque Kermel Market, overflowing with fruits and flowers, before setting off for the charming Medina. Return to the hotel for a welcome dinner and overnight.

Tuesday, April 24

Dakar / Embark Clipper Odyssey

After breakfast choose a full-day birding excursion to search for West Africa's avifauna, or depart for a tour of infamous Gorée Island, a World Heritage Site. From the 15th – 19th centuries Gorée was a slave-trading center, and we witness the contrasts between the dungeon-like slave quarters and the elegant colonial mansions of the slave traders. We explore the moving 18th-century House of Slaves, the Women's Museum, and the fortified Le Castel, offering splendid views. After lunch we continue our exploration of Dakar. Embark the Clipper Odyssey this afternoon.

Wednesday, April 25

At Sea

As we cruise toward the Cape Verde Islands our lecturers offer natural history and cultural perspectives on these starkly beautiful islands.

Thursday, April 26

São Tiago Island, Cape Verde Islands

São Tiago, the largest of the Cape Verde Islands, is crowned by Antonia Peak which rises 4,500 feet above fertile farmlands. Today choose from three tour options. A full-day island tour takes us through green valleys and mountains to tiny villages, the Botanical Gardens and Horticultural Institute, and the bustling town of Assomada. Enjoy lunch at a local restaurant, then join a guided walk through seaside Tarrafal, including the central market and ancient prison-turned-museum. We return to the relaxed capital city of Praia and explore its colonial remnants, the fortress of São Filipe, local market, and museum. Or choose to visit Cidada Velha. Founded in 1462, it was an important stop on the slave trading route. Explore Praia before lunch on board, then enjoy a tour of the Botanical Gardens. Birders depart for a full-day excursion to search for the cream-colored courser, European golden plover, and gray-headed kingfisher.

Friday, April 27

São Vicente Island

Birders head out this morning from Mindelo, while the rest of the group visits Fortim, the site of an old fort, with spectacular views. In the lovely town we see the Governor's Palace, court house, local market, and Amilcar Cabral Square, flanked by brightly painted colonial Portuguese houses. We also enjoy stunning views from the top of Mt. Verde. After lunch at a local restaurant we explore the rocky beaches of Calhau.

Saturday April 28

Santo Antão Island

Cape Verde's greenest island boasts a spectacular array of landscapes, from stark volcanic flats to lush green peaks and tropical valleys. After breakfast, Zodiacs whisk us to Puerto Novo where we embark on a scenic drive along the coast and into the mountains. Gentle strolls and more active hikes reveal dramatic vistas, steep volcanic peaks, lush farmlands, quaint towns, and unique flora and fauna. Return to the ship for lunch as we set sail for the Canary Islands.

Sunday & Monday, April 29 & 30

Cruising the Atlantic Ocean

Be on deck to watch for pilot whales and dolphins. Our lecturers introduce the Canary Islands, once a steppingstone in the era of exploration.

Tuesday, May 1

Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Canary Islands, Spain

An early morning arrival in the Canary Islands' capital of Tenerife gives us a full day to explore. A cultural tour visits charming villages, dramatic miradors (viewpoints), and the university town of La Laguna. This World Heritage Site, designated for being the first, non-fortified Spanish colonial town, is a showcase of superb examples of 16th – 18th-century architecture, a layout that became the model for many American colonial towns.

A natural history tour includes the spectacular Botanical Gardens and a walk through the town of La Orotava. At Teide National Park, a World Heritage Site, we view the twisted volcanic formations of basalt and obsidian surrounding Spain's highest peak. After lunch at El Parador, enjoy a gentle or a more active hike to view the Roques de Garcia—bizarrely eroded rocks set in ochre plains and rivers of lava at the mountain's base. Birders spend the day looking for some of the 200 species that populate the varied habitat.

Wednesday, May 2

Lanzarote

Lanzarote, a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, is a volcanic island with some 300 cinder cones pock-marking its rugged landscape. This morning we have a choice of two tours. Our north-bound option features a drive to the charming “white village” and ancient capital, Teguise, and the Jameos del Agua, a spectacular lava-tube cave transformed by famed local artist César Manrique into a delightful series of pools, gardens, and a natural amphitheater.

Or, you may choose to explore Timanfaya National Park and its stunning volcanic landscape, a legacy of the 1824 eruption. By coach, by dromedary, and on foot watch for some of the 177 species of rare plants, many of them unique to the Canaries. On the nearby coast, we view natural geologic formations where water rushes dramatically into a sea-eroded volcanic cave at Los Hervideros. Birders keep a keen eye out for houbara bustards, Berthelot's pipits, and other species. This afternoon we set sail for Morocco.

Thursday, May 3

Agadir, Morocco / Taroudant

After breakfast we set off on a drive from Agadir to the inland town of Taroudant, often called “little Marrakech,” to walk along the fortress ramparts and through the central plaza. The colorful Berber Market offers a fascinating array of spices and quality handicrafts, while the artisan souk displays silverwork, leather goods, and carpets. We enjoy lunch here and return to Agadir.

*******Thursday & Friday, May 3 & 4**

Optional Excursion to Marrakech

Join us for a two-day optional overnight excursion to magical Marrakech. From Agadir, we drive inland through the “breadbasket of Morocco,” the Chaouia Plain. The romantic rose-red city of Marrakech perches on the edge of the pre-Saharan Plains along Berber trade routes. We explore sites such as the opulent 19th-century Bahia Palace, the medina—a World Heritage Site—the Koutoubia Mosque, the imperial Saadian tombs, and Djemaa El Fna Square. Enjoy dinner and overnight in our Marrakech hotel.

The next day we explore the Majorelle Gardens; the Palmeraie, a vast area of date palms; and the bustling souk. After lunch at a local restaurant, drive through the stunning scenery of the desert and Atlas Mountains before arriving in Casablanca where we re-board the ship.

Or join a full-day birding excursion in the Atlas Mountains. Winding up into the mountains, we make several stops to search for a variety of birds including the scarce and localized Barbary falcon, black wheatear, Atlas chaffinch, and flocks of aerobatic red-billed chough. With a great deal of luck, we may also encounter one of the great raptors of the world, the massive lammergeier.

Friday, May 4**Casablanca**

This afternoon we dock in lovely Casablanca whose modern quarters, defined by broad palm tree-lined boulevards, are juxtaposed with the city's elegant and historic civic buildings, designed in the 1930s in the Mauresque architectural style. We begin our exploration with an excursion to the colorful Central Market, followed by a stop at the Hassan II Mosque, the second largest religious structure in the world (after Mecca). Its 700-foot-high minaret is visible for miles. Continuing on, we pass through the elegant Corniche district which spreads along the Atlantic coast; the Anfa Quarters, where Roosevelt met with Churchill during World War II; the impressive Law Courts; and the Habbous Quarters, built by the French in the early 20th century. We return to the ship for dinner and sail towards Gibraltar.

Saturday, May 5**Gibraltar, United Kingdom**

The 1,400-foot Rock of Gibraltar soars from the sea as we sail through the strategic Strait of Gibraltar, which connects the Atlantic and Mediterranean. We explore this tiny British outpost, including the labyrinthine St. Michael's cave, and visit Europa Point for superb views across the strait to the northern coast of Morocco. Naturalists search for the griffon vulture, Barbary partridge, and the colorful indigenous wildflower known as the Gibraltar candytuft. Uphill, we meet the Barbary apes, a colony of introduced macaques that are the photogenic icons of "The Rock."

Sunday, May 6**Malaga, Spain / Disembark**

Early this morning disembark the Clipper Odyssey and transfer to the airport for your independent flight back homeward.