

WESTERN PACIFIC ODYSSEY

A GRAND VOYAGE FROM NEW ZEALAND,
VIA PAPUA NEW GUINEA, TO JAPAN

EXPEDITION DOSSIER

13 – 27 MARCH 2025 TO PAPUA NEW GUINEA

13 MARCH – 6 APRIL 2025 TO JAPAN



**HERITAGE
EXPEDITIONS**





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Known in birding circles simply as the 'WPO', this expedition incorporates many of the key birding areas in the South West Pacific. First offered in 2007, it is now considered one of the 'must do' expeditions for any birder because of its opportunities to see some of the rarest pelagic seabirds in the world, plus many island endemics. But it is not just for 'birders', the cetacean list can only be described as outstanding, while there is also so much more to enjoy for anyone interested in taking a leisurely expedition cruise through a transect of the Pacific Ocean. Remote beaches, glowing tropical sunsets (with maybe a green flash or two!), flying fish,

towering tropical rainforests and wild and remote oceans just to name a few. This season guests have the option to disembark in Kavieng, Papua New Guinea, or continue on a specially priced extension through to Japan.

After departing Auckland, New Zealand, we sail for the rich waters of the Hauraki Gulf where there are numerous speciality seabirds, including the New Zealand Storm-petrel. From there it's northward to Australia's Norfolk Island with its endemic birds, Norfolk Pines and rugged shoreline. Our next stop is New Caledonia, one of the world's most biologically interesting islands, where we search for the amazing Kagu and other endemic bird species in the Parc Provincial de la Rivière Bleue/Riviere Bleue.

Heading on through Melanesia we will call in at a couple of the largest islands, Guadalcanal and Bougainville, before cruising across the New Britain Trench, an area known to be extremely rich in cetaceans. As we sail along the coasts of Bougainville and New Ireland, we will look for two rarely seen seabirds: Heinroth's Shearwater and the critically endangered Beck's Petrel which was only rediscovered in 2007, both of which we have seen on almost all our previous expeditions in this region.

Following a further stop at Kavieng, Papua New Guinea, guests have the option to disembark or continue on our extension sailing northward all the way to Japan. We will arrive at the Bonin Islands south of Japan; our route will take us to Chichi-jima, the largest island in the archipelago and where we have observed the critically endangered Bryan's Shearwater. We then intend to backtrack slightly to Haha-jima to look for the weird Bonin White-eye and resume our northwards journey to Tori-shima Island where we hope to get great views of the Short-tailed Albatross before we arrive at our last port of call in Osaka, Japan, where our voyage concludes.

This expedition is accompanied by some of the best pelagic birding guides in the world who have extensive experience of the seabirds of the West Pacific and have visited the islands we will be landing on multiple times. Birding starts at dawn and finishes at sundown. Our guides are there throughout the day to assist you and the 'reading of the bird list' each evening is legendary for its detail and discussion. This is one birding expedition you can't afford to miss.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Auckland, New Zealand

Join *Heritage Adventurer* this afternoon in the heart of New Zealand's commercial capital, Auckland. Your Captain and Expedition Team will be waiting to greet you on arrival and show you to your cabin. You will have time to settle in and familiarise yourself with the ship; we will also take the opportunity to introduce you to your Expedition Team and Guides and our voyage plans. You are invited to join your Expedition Team and Guides in the Observation Lounge and up on the Observation Deck as we set sail for the Hauraki Gulf.

Day 2: Mokohinau Islands and the Hauraki Gulf

Daybreak will find us in the Mokohinau Islands (known locally as the Mokes), a group of small islands in the Hauraki Gulf. These predator free islands are a haven for breeding seabirds and we should start the voyage with a wonderful selection of seabirds around the ship Grey Noddy are usually to be found perching on some of the rocks and there is an Australasian Gannet colony here as well. As we head further out to sea we will focus on looking for the New Zealand Storm Petrel. The species' recent and astonishing discovery is now well known along with the fact that it

is breeding at Little Barrier Island. We have never missed this special bird and usually find several. Indeed this whole area offers fantastic seabirding and some of the other species we can hope to see are Little Blue Penguin; Black, Grey-faced, Cook's and possibly Pycroft's Petrel, Buller's, Flesh-footed, Fluttering and Little Shearwater, Fairy Prion, White-faced Storm Petrel and Common Diving Petrel. In addition this area is a good feeding ground for albatross and we are likely see several species including White-capped, Campbell, Buller's and Antipodean Albatross. The waters of the Hauraki Gulf usually have a few cetaceans around including Short-beaked Common Dolphin, Long-finned Pilot Whale and occasionally Bryde's Whale.

Day 3: At Sea

Today will be spent sailing north to Norfolk Island and passes through rich waters for seabirds. These deep, far offshore waters are excellent for an impressive mix of Pterodroma/Gadfly Petrels

and we hope to see Grey-faced, Kermadec, White-necked, Black-winged, Cook's, Gould's and Tahiti Petrel. There should again be good numbers of albatross around and they will be some of the last we see until we enter the realm of their Northern Hemisphere cousins much later in the journey. We sometimes see beaked whales in these deep waters and several species of these enigmatic cetaceans occur here. We stand a good chance to see Sperm Whales as well.

Day 4: Norfolk Island, Australia

This far flung island, named by Captain James Cook, has a rich history. Initially inhabited by Polynesians, it later served as a penal colony and was then colonised by descendents of *The Bounty* mutineers. The famous and picturesque Norfolk Island Pine dominates the landscape over much of the island, along with palms and the world's tallest treeferns. Sadly much of the incredible array of endemic wildlife that this island once held is extinct following the arrival of humans and their commensals, but the remaining forests are magnificent and still support a selection of endemic birds: Norfolk Parakeet, Slender-billed White-eye, Norfolk Robin and Norfolk Gerygone. Also found here are Pacific Emerald Dove, Golden Whistler and Grey Fantail. During our time ashore there may also be an opportunity





to see some nesting seabirds including Black Noddy, White Tern and spectacular Red-tailed Tropicbirds. As we depart the island in the latter part of the afternoon there will be some excellent opportunities for more seabirding. The Island's breeding seabird population was decimated but is making a steady recovery with predator control. We will be on the lookout here for 'Tasman' Brown Booby, White-bellied and White-faced Storm Petrel, Little Shearwater and, in some years, Providence Petrel have also been observed.

Day 5: At Sea

As we sail north through the Coral Sea we can expect yet another excellent day of seabirding from the decks. Once again it will be those amazing Pterodroma petrels that should provide much of the entertainment and today we will be looking for more Kermadec, White-necked, Black-winged, Gould's and Tahiti Petrel. If we are lucky there may be a few Providence or even Herald Petrel around and we should encounter our first Collared Petrels of the voyage. Both the light and dark morph of this species should be encountered, the dark morph often being referred to as Magnificent Petrel. We will pay particular attention to storm petrels on this leg of the journey. In addition to Wilson's

and White-faced Storm Petrel, we hope to see White-bellied Storm Petrel and, with luck, even Polynesian Storm Petrel. It is on this transit that we began seeing a mysterious Storm Petrel in the early days of the WPO. The bird is now recognised as being the rediscovery of the long lost *Fregetta lineata* and is known as the New Caledonian Storm Petrel. The species appears to be quite rare and hard to see here but we have managed to observe it on several occasions to the south of its presumed breeding grounds somewhere around New Caledonia.

Day 6: Riviere Bleue, New Caledonia

New Caledonia has been described as a taste of France in the Pacific and is one of the most fascinating islands in the world. First inhabited by Lapita peoples, it was named by Captain James Cook who felt it reminded him of Scotland. New Caledonia is a fragment of

the ancient supercontinent of Gondwana, and it is believed that it detached and became an island tens of millions of years ago. Isolation over such a long period of time on a relatively large tropical island explains both the extent of biodiversity and the incredible levels of endemism on this delightful tropical island. Its botany is characterised by an extraordinary diversity of gymnosperms particularly the spectacular Araucaria Trees, along with some of the largest tree ferns on Earth. It also holds the most ancient lineage of flowering plants and the largest gecko in the world. In common with so many Pacific Islands, there was a tragic extinction of many amazing birds upon the arrival of humans, yet the island still plays host to an extraordinary number of endemic species. Foremost of these is, of course, the Kagu the sole surviving member of its family. This extraordinary, flightless bird is now readily seen in Riviere Bleue, thanks to a massive conservation effort. We will be visiting this special reserve today to seek out the Kagu. Everyone has seen the pictures but to experience this unique creature in the feathers is a lifetime birding highlight. Also here are almost all of the island's other endemic birds headlined by spectacular Cloven-feathered Dove, Horned Parakeet and the critically endangered and often tricky to see Crow Honeyeater.





© P. Ryan

The long list of other endemics include Goliath Imperial-pigeon, White-bellied Goshawk, New Caledonian Parakeet, New Caledonian Myzomela, New Caledonian Whistler, the tool-using New Caledonian Crow, South Melanesian Cuckooshrike, New Caledonian Friarbird, Barred Honeyeater, Yellow-bellied Robin, Green-backed White-eye and Red-throated Parrotfinch. Our time here at Riviere Bleue is a chance to immerse ourselves into one of the most spectacular and well protected forests on the island and experience not only the birdlife but some of the extraordinary botany as well.

Day 7: Mount Koghi

With another morning of birding on this special island, today we visit the slightly higher forest elevations of Mount Koghi. Our time here will be spent looking for any birds we missed yesterday. These forests tend to be better for White-bellied Goshawk, Cloven-feathered Dove, New Caledonian Crow and Striated Starling, even the poorly-known and rarely observed New Caledonian Thicketbird occurs here. Other birds to keep an eye out for include Streaked Fantail, Southern Shrikebill and Metallic Pigeon. Those so inclined may wish to spend some time exploring the capital of Noumea or enjoy a swim. Once back on board we will sail along the world's longest, continuous barrier reef systems, a very scenic cruise and with some interesting birds including Fairy Tern. Once beyond the reef we should see

large numbers of Gould's Petrels and Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and this will provide us with another opportunity to seek out the New Caledonian Storm Petrel.

Days 8 to 10: At Sea

We now have three sea days as we steam north into the tropical waters of the Solomon Islands. While the pelagic birding may slow a bit as we head into warmer waters, it remains excellent. This stretch is our best chance to observe the incredible Polynesian Storm Petrel and we should also see Band-rumped Storm Petrel. The latter was initially discovered in this area during the WPO and seems likely to represent an unknown breeding population. We should also enjoy more Collared and Tahiti Petrels, both Red-tailed and White-tailed Tropicbirds plus hopefully watch Masked, Brown and Red-footed Boobies hunt the dazzling array of often spectacularly coloured flying fish that are abundant in these waters. As always, it is worth keeping an eye out for cetaceans including Sperm Whales, various beaked whales, and Short-finned Pilot Whales.

Day 11: Guadalcanal, Solomon Islands

A chain of almost 1,000 lushly forested islands and some of the highest levels of endemism and marine life on Earth define this remarkable, yet rarely-visited nation. We will be exploring the largest of the country's islands, Guadalcanal. Perhaps best known to the outside world for the intense fighting that occurred here during World War II, Guadalcanal has been inhabited for many thousands of years. Its rugged and almost totally unexplored interior contrast sharply with the thriving city of Honiara, the capital. An early morning departure from *Heritage Adventurer* allows us relatively quick access into some lower montane forest where along a road we can seek out a few Guadalcanal endemics and a large number of slightly more widespread Solomons endemics. Some of the more sought after species here include Ultramarine Kingfisher, Solomons Cockatoo, Guadalcanal Crow and the huge Sanford's/Solomon Sea Eagle. Among the long list of other possible species are Pied Goshawk, Claret-breasted Fruit-dove, Cardinal and Yellow-bibbed Lory, Buff-headed Coucal, spectacular Blyth's Hornbill, attractive Solomons Cuckooshrike, Black-headed Myzomela, Chestnut-bellied Monarch, Steel-blue Flycatcher, Brown-winged Starling, Long-



© A. Alanen



tailed Myna and Midget Flowerpecker. It will certainly be one of our most diverse stops of the voyage!

Day 12: At Sea, Solomon Islands

We sail westwards through the Solomon Islands chain today. Because of its remarkable oceanic topography, the Solomons can offer some of the best tropical seabird and marine mammal watching anywhere. Some transits can be teeming with life, while others can be quieter. We should experience some feeding frenzies of terns, boobies, Wedge-tailed Shearwaters and marauding Frigatebirds. We also stand a good chance of observing the strange and rare Heinroth's Shearwater today. Marine mammal sightings in this area are always hard to predict but we regularly see Kogias here including Dwarf Sperm Whale, and even rare Pygmy Sperm Whales. Spinner and Pantropical Spotted Dolphin are the most regularly observed dolphin species and Pygmy Killer Whales seem fairly regular. Blainville's, Cuvier's and even Longman's Beaked Whales have all been seen on previous voyages, while flying fish reach some of their highest diversity in this area.

Day 13: Bougainville Island, Papua New Guinea

Geographically we are entering Papua New Guinea today, but biologically Bougainville has more in common with the Solomon Islands and is the largest island in the archipelago. With a tumultuous history it is only

fairly recently that Bougainville has reopened to tourism, but is nowadays a very welcoming destination. Happily there is a paved road that gives easy access to some mid elevation forest which, while somewhat degraded, still offers excellent birding. We will have more opportunities to observe Sanford's/Solomon Sea Eagle, Solomons Cockatoo and Ultramarine Kingfisher today and we will be looking for endemics including the Bougainville Crow, Bougainville Monarch and perhaps the secretive Bougainville Bush Warbler. Other new birds to look for today are many and include Yellow-throated White-eye, Bougainville White-eye, Solomons Monarch, Red-capped Myzomela, Pale Mountain Pigeon, Mackinlay's Cuckoo Dove and Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon.

Day 14: At Sea, off the coast of Bougainville

Today we will be sailing between Bougainville and New Ireland. It is in this region that we will be looking for the Beck's Petrel. Some of the first ever at sea sightings of this very poorly known seabird occurred on this voyage and to this day almost every birder that has observed a Beck's Petrel has done it while on the Western Pacific Odyssey! So we will be working hard to see this species again today. Heinroth's Shearwater is another exciting possibility in this area.

Again, cetaceans are very hard to predict but this area is home to many infrequently seen species. It can be particularly good for Kogias (the Dwarf and Pygmy Sperm Whale), along with the blackfish: False Killer Whale, Pygmy Killer Whale, Short-finned Pilot Whale and Melon-headed Whale. If we are fortunate enough to see the latter species it will most likely be accompanied by the beautiful Fraser's Dolphin.

Day 15: Kavieng

The capital of Papua New Guinean province of New Ireland and the largest town on the island of the same name, Kavieng is known for its ancient Malagan culture. Those choosing to disembark today say their farewells after breakfast with a transfer to Kavieng Airport. For those continuing the adventure we plan to explore the best birding opportunities possible with the available time, we should be able to locate the endemic Mottled Mannikin/Munia. Other possibilities here include the Variable Goshawk, White-bellied Sea Eagle, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon and Bismarck Crow.

Days 16 to 20: At Sea

We now have five days at sea as we sail northwards. These are days to relax and catch up on notes and photos as we cross the Equator and sail through a blue desert. While the birding will be slow in these deep, warm waters there will be occasional sightings of Bulwer's Petrel, White-tailed Tropicbird, White and Sooty Tern and both Great and Lesser Frigatebirds. In the final day or two to Japan things should pick up considerably as exciting new species begin to make their first appearance including Matsudaira's Storm Petrel, Bonin Petrel and Bannerman's Shearwater.

Day 21: Chichi-jima Island, Japan

We will arrive at the Bonin Islands, the most remote part of Japan with plans to complete customs at the largest of the Bonin Islands, Chichi-jima. While here there may be time for a short walk on shore to explore the settlement and the surrounding area. During the afternoon we will look for the critically endangered Bryan's Shearwater. This mysterious seabird was described based on a bird found in a burrow on Hawaii but is currently believed to breed only in the Bonins and in tiny numbers at that. We will be in the vicinity of its only known breeding island and will certainly try our best to see it this afternoon, along with the much more numerous Bannerman's Shearwater.

Day 22: Haha-jima Island

Today we will be returning south to visit the most interesting of the Bonin Islands, biologically speaking, Haha-jima. This hard to reach island is the last home of the bizarre Bonin White-eye and we hope to see this strange species while ashore. While its taxonomic affinities have been hotly debated, it is now considered to be a white-eye in its own genera. It can be a bit tricky to find, so we will hope for some luck during our time ashore. The greenfinch that occurs here was recently recognised to be a distinct species, the Bonin Greenfinch, and while its status on this island is a bit unclear it certainly does occur at least as a visitor. Other possibilities today include the Japanese Wood Pigeon, Eastern Buzzard, Brown-eared Bulbul, Japanese Bush Warbler, Warbling White-eye, White's Thrush and Blue Rock Thrush. A variety of shorebirds and passerines could also occur here as transient migrants and there are lots of possibilities. Humpback Whales are also often seen here in the nearshore waters.



Day 23: Tori-shima Island

Today we will be off Tori-shima Island, a spectacular looking island and an active volcano which has not been inhabited since a volcanic eruption 1902. Tori-shima was thought to be the last stronghold of the Short-tailed Albatross which disappeared in the 1940s and was feared to have gone extinct. Miraculously birds began reappearing in 1954 and reformed a breeding colony which has grown to several thousand. Obviously, seeing this species will be the prime focus of the day. While landings are not permitted on the island, after communications with the relevant authorities we will approach as close as allowed aboard *Heritage Adventurer* and should get to see this magnificent bird, hopefully in good numbers. Other species that could be present include Black-footed and Laysan Albatross, Streaked Shearwater, and both Tristram's and Matsudaira's Storm Petrel. We also sometimes see cetaceans in this area and sightings on previous voyages have included Risso's and Pantropical Spotted Dolphin, Melon-headed Whale, Cuvier's Beaked Whale and even the very rarely seen Ginkgo-toothed Beaked Whale.

Day 24: At Sea

Our final day at sea will see us sailing towards Honshu where we hope for one last blast of excellent pelagic birding on this final stretch. Some expected species here include the Streaked Shearwater, and Tristram's and Matsudaira's Storm Petrel. We will also be on the lookout for Japanese Murrelet in these waters, although seeing them will take some luck.

Day 25: Osaka

After breakfast and arrival formalities have been completed for Osaka, you will disembark *Heritage Adventurer*. There will be a complimentary transfer from the ship to Osaka Air Terminal. We ask you not to book any onward flights (Domestic or International) until mid-afternoon to account for any delays and the time it takes to travel to the airport.

Note: During our voyage, circumstances may make it necessary or desirable to deviate from the proposed itinerary. This can include poor weather and opportunities for making unplanned excursions. Your Expedition Leader will keep you fully informed.



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HERITAGE ADVENTURER

Heritage Adventurer is a true pioneering expedition vessel of exceptional pedigree often referred to as the 'Grande Dame of Exploration Cruising'.

Purpose built for adventure in 1991 at Finland's Rauma shipyard and specifically designed for Polar exploration, *Heritage Adventurer* (formerly known as *MS Hanseatic*) is 124-metres long, boasts the highest passenger-ship ice-class rating (1A Super) and an impressive history of Polar and remote region exploration making her perfect for Heritage Expeditions signature experiential expedition travel.

Originally designed to accommodate 184 guests, we now welcome just 140 expeditioners to create a spacious, comfortable on board experience and continuation of the exceptional, personalised expedition experience synonymous with the company. While a fleet of 14 Zodiacs ensures

all guests are able to maximise their expedition experience. On board, enjoy stylish, sophisticated accommodations spanning 4 decks, visit the captain and crew in the Bridge with our Open Bridge Policy and dine on gourmet fare from leading Australasian chefs.

Watch your adventure unfold from numerous spectacular indoor and outdoor viewing locations including *Heritage Adventurer's* famed Observation Lounge resplendent with 270-degree views and join our world-renowned team of naturalists, botanists, historians and experts as they interpret the natural and human history discovered during each voyage, as well as hosting regular lectures.

And should you require a little R&R, unwind in the library, pool, gym, hot tub, sauna and steam room, indulge in some retail therapy or find a quiet place to enjoy a coffee or cocktail from the café and bar.

DATES

Voyage #HA250313
13 – 27 March 2025
Auckland – Kavieng

Voyage #HA250313A – Extension
13 March – 6 April 2025
Auckland – Osaka

PRICES NZD\$

Heritage Suite \$40,000 pp*/\$46,200 pp*
Located on Deck 6, Heritage Suites are an expansive 44m² and feature large double panoramic windows, king bed, large living area with a sofa, coffee table and chairs and grand marble bathroom with a double basin, bathtub and shower, large writing desk, floor to ceiling cabinetry for storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Worsley Suite \$28,350 pp*/\$33,350 pp*
Located on Deck 6, Worsley Suites are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable chaise-style lounge suite, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Single \$24,195 pp*/\$28,195 pp*
Superior Single Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Triple \$17,150 pp*/\$20,250 pp*
Superior Triple Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 5 \$19,750 pp*/\$23,150 pp*
Superior Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 4 \$18,295 pp*/\$21,395 pp*
Superior Cabins on Deck 4 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Single \$22,335 pp*/\$26,035 pp*
Main Deck Single Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Triple \$15,475 pp*/\$18,075 pp*
Main Deck Triple Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

* The price listed includes the additional local payment of NZD\$1,500 (All prices are per person in NZD\$).

PRICE INCLUDES

Local payment, pre/post cruise transfers, all on board ship accommodation with meals, house beer, wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner and all expedition shore excursions. Programme of lectures by noted naturalists.

PRICE EXCLUDES

All items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/domestic flights, visas and travel insurance.

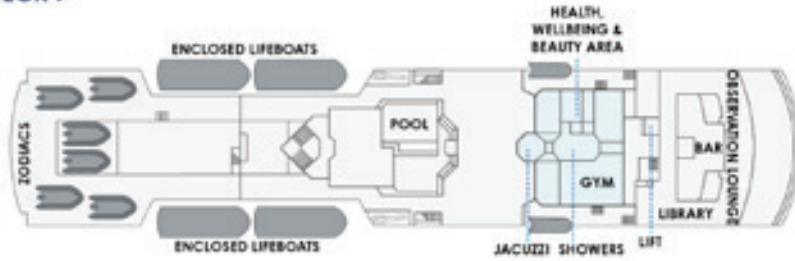
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Heritage Adventurer Deck Plan



- DECK 4: ● WORSLEY SUITE ● HERITAGE SUITE
- DECK 5: ● SUPERIOR ● SUPERIOR TRIPLE ● SUPERIOR SINGLE
- DECK 4: ● SUPERIOR
- DECK 3: ● MAIN DECK TRIPLE ● MAIN DECK SINGLE

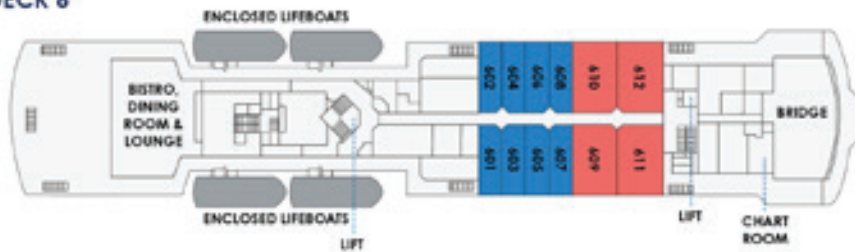
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DECK 8



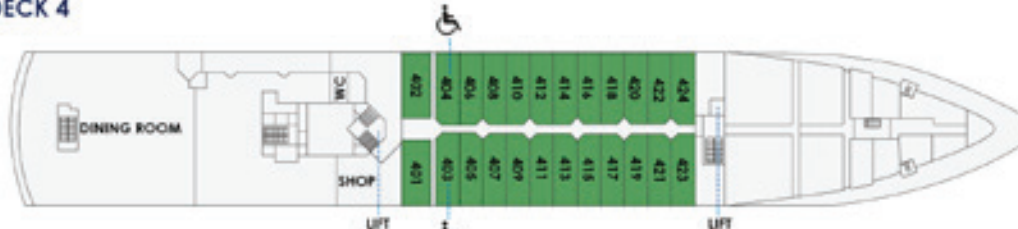
DECK 6



DECK 5



DECK 4



DECK 3



DECK 2



SUITE CATEGORIES

- HERITAGE SUITE
- SUPERIOR SINGLE
- DECK 4 SUPERIOR
- MAIN DECK SINGLE
- WORSLEY SUITE
- DECK 5 SUPERIOR
- MAIN DECK TRIPLE
- SUPERIOR TRIPLE



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