

THE EXOTIC ANDAMAN ISLANDS AND SHORES OF THE BAY OF BENGAL

“We regard India as one of Durrell’s ‘hot spots’. We have many people working in wildlife conservation there who trained at Durrell.”

Dr Lee Durrell

We are fortunate to have two inspirational and knowledgeable speakers to accompany us throughout our voyage. Dr Lesley Dickie, the newly appointed CEO of Durrell and Andy Bunten, one of our favourite ornithologists and marine mammal experts. On board, our hosts will be Martin Thompson, a Director of The Ultimate Travel Company and Amelia Dalton, who will again create a unique one-off itinerary.

Embarking in the colonial city of Yangon (Rangoon) initially we sail east towards Thailand to the bustling trading port of Mawlamyine, where Kipling was inspired to write his famous poem ‘The Road to Mandalay’. Voyaging south, we call at the tropical islands of the Andaman Archipelago. These little-visited islands provide a fascinating insight into the British Indian colonial period as well as having superb unspoilt and rich marine reserves. We turn north, and take advantage of our expedition ship’s ability to access the unique and vast estuarine-world of the coastal forests of the Sundarbans. Touring by Zodiac and on foot, we explore the tortuous creeks of the world’s largest river delta – the mighty Ganges. The ship will relocate within the delta during our days here to enable us to experience the varied areas and see different wildlife as we thread through the channels and walk on boardwalks. Local rangers will come on board to enlighten us about their work in this unique ecosystem. In India we visit the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary in the foothills of the Eastern Ghats with an impressive diversity of flora and fauna, the keynote species being Indian leopard. We experience the colourful cultural traditions of Andhra Pradesh before we end our voyage in the fascinating city of Chennai (Madras).

We will shortly finalise which of the Durrell trained conservationists now working in India will join us to tell us about the important work on species conservation and fascinating projects they are now involved with.

We would love to have your company.

Get in touch with The Ultimate Travel Company on 020 3411 4595 to reserve your cabin.

THE EXPEDITION TEAM



DR LESLEY DICKIE

GUEST LECTURER

Lesley became Chief Executive Officer of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust in 2016, launching their new nine-year strategy, ‘Rewilding our World’ in 2017. Previously she was records and zoo keeper at Edinburgh Zoo, followed by Zoo Conservation Programme Manager at the Zoological Society of London and then Executive Director of European Association of Zoos and Aquaria based in Amsterdam. She also recently chaired the Asian Species Action Partnership. With Lesley will be her husband, Professor David Field, Zoological Director at the Zoological Society of London and Whipsnade, where he is responsible for the animal collections, captive breeding, vets and education.



ANDY BUNTEN

GUEST LECTURER

Andy previously worked for many years in the field of nature conservation for wildlife trusts, local government and, for 26 years as Regional Director for the RSPB. He has been passionate about wildlife and nature conservation for as long as he can remember. Now an independent tour leader and lecturer who delights in leading Ultimate Travel’s passengers. He is well travelled, too, having worked in the Seychelles, Burma and Sierra Leone helping local people solve their local conservation issues and having led groups to places as far afield as Iceland and Hong Kong.



MARTIN THOMPSON

TOUR LEADER

Martin has always worked in the leisure industry. He started life as an hotelier which took him to Kenya for nine years, followed in 1982 by 15 years running Abercrombie and Kent before he went on to found The Ultimate Travel Company. He is well travelled and has a large amount of experience in leading tours to destinations worldwide including the last two Durrell expeditions to Borneo and Bali and the Indian Ocean including Madagascar, Aldabra and Seychelles. He has also led tours to Antarctica, fishing in the Himalayas and Argentina, Laos and Vietnam and Tiger Safaris in India.



AMELIA DALTON

TOUR PLANNER

Having operated her own small expedition vessel in Scotland, Amelia went on to establish a unique programme of cruises for one of the world’s leading small luxury ship companies. For over 15 years, drawing on her knowledge of both the natural and cultural worlds, she has also planned and led numerous tours on both land and sea to a wide variety of destinations, including Myanmar and the five previous Durrell expeditions to the Indian Ocean, Central America and Borneo and Bali.



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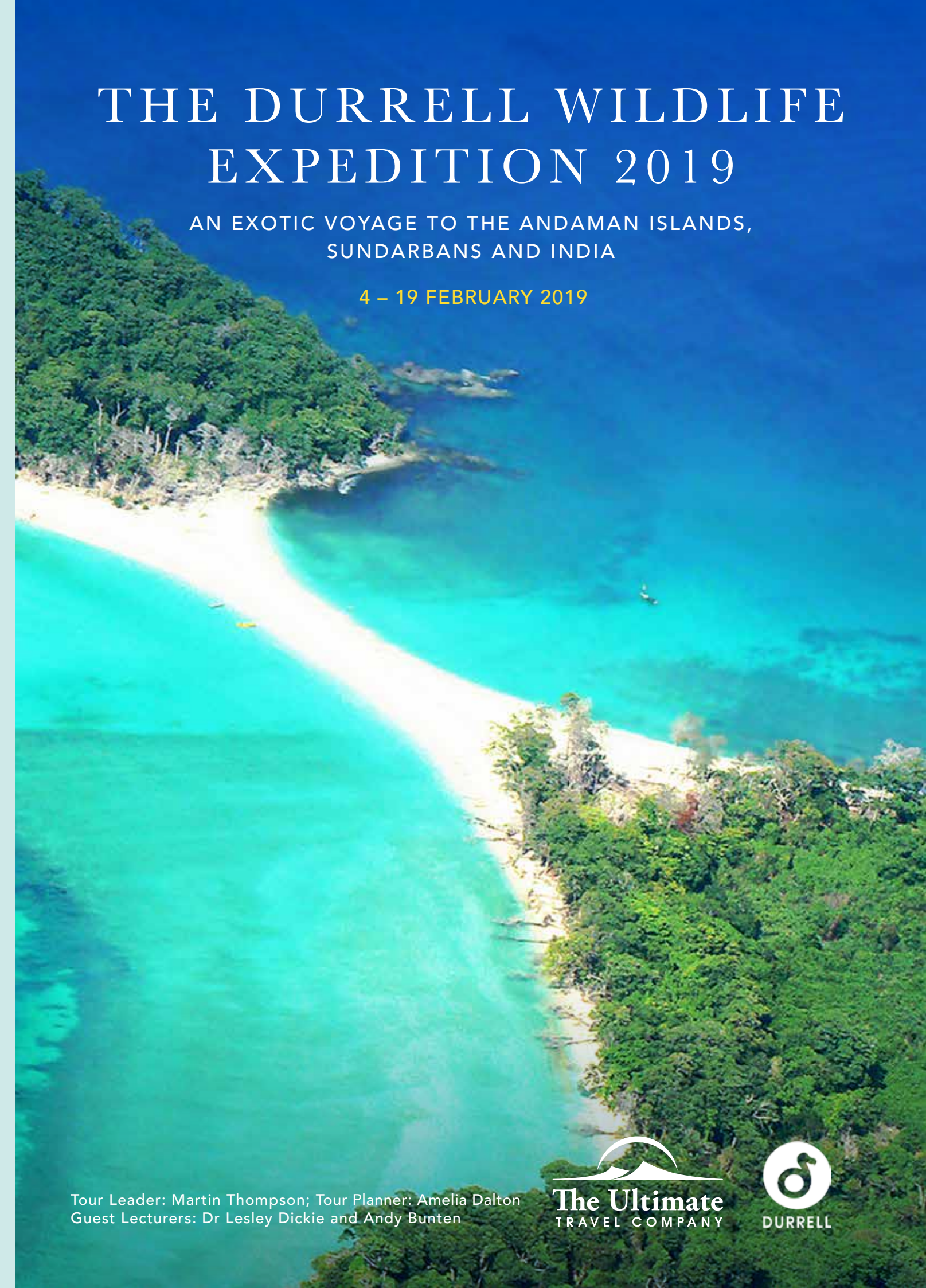
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THE DURRELL WILDLIFE EXPEDITION 2019

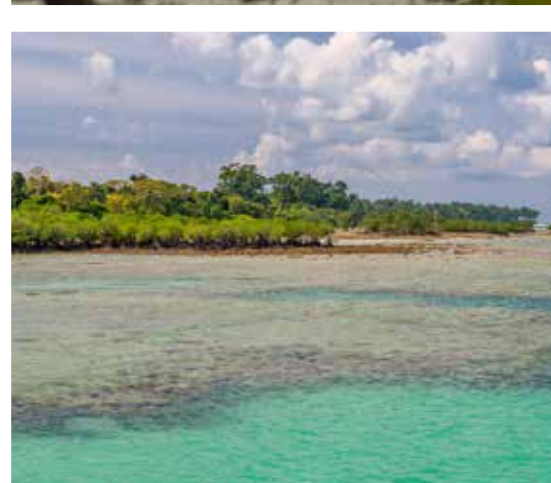
AN EXOTIC VOYAGE TO THE ANDAMAN ISLANDS,
SUNDARBANS AND INDIA

4 – 19 FEBRUARY 2019



Tour Leader: Martin Thompson; Tour Planner: Amelia Dalton
Guest Lecturers: Dr Lesley Dickie and Andy Bunten





16 DAY ITINERARY, DEPARTS 4 FEBRUARY 2019

4 February London / Yangon

Depart London Heathrow at 20.20 hrs on Emirates flight EK4 (suggested flights are subject to schedule change and have not been included in cost of tour).

5 February Yangon

Arrive Dubai at 07.20 hrs and depart on flight EK388 at 09.00 hrs arriving Yangon at 16.45 hrs. Transfer to the port for embarkation. After settling into our delightful small expedition ship, Silver Discoverer, we meet the expedition team, our fellow passengers and our lecturers as we begin our journey down the Irrawaddy River to the open sea and voyage east across the Gulf of Martaban.

6 February Mawlamyine & Bilu Kyun Island

The ship anchors in the Thanlwin River close to Mawlamyine; once a trading post for pearl-fishing and teak, the town had a substantial Anglo-Burmese population and retains its colonial core. George Orwell's family was based here and the Kyaikthanian Pagoda, immortalised by Kipling's famous poem 'The Road to Mandalay' is one of the town's landmarks. The most interesting aspects are the atmospheric markets, alive with colour from the local Karen, Mon and Kayah people selling a diverse array of goods from the hinterland and nearby Thailand. After a picnic lunch we visit peaceful Bilu Kyun Island, with its rice fields, bullock carts and fishermen to

experience the gentle rural life with tiny cottage industries creating beautifully turned walking sticks, bamboo hats, pipes and children's mini blackboards. We return to the ship by zodiac.

7 February At Sea

A relaxing day at sea as we begin to learn more of our future destinations and local conservation projects.

8 February Port Blair

This morning we arrive at the leafy town of Port Blair, in the Andaman Islands, and travel the short distance to visit the infamous Cellular Jail. Standing on a small rise and overlooking the sea, the solid construction originally had 7 spokes – the wings of the jail – enabling a jailer to sit in the middle and monitor the cell doors. This sombre but fascinating edifice is a bleak reminder of the British period and was declared a National Memorial by the Indian Government. It now has an art gallery and small museum.

9 February North & South Cinque Islands

Linked by a spectacular isthmus, revealed at low water, these southerly islands of the Andaman Archipelago are blessed with superb snorkelling, rich in colourful coral 'bommies' or mushrooms where the abundant fish life clusters. After a morning's beach and swimming time, we depart the archipelago via Ross Island passing the decaying British colonial buildings to voyage north across the Andaman Sea.

10 February At Sea

A day to delve into a book, visit the spa, catch the lectures from our on-board team and simply enjoy our well-appointed small ship.

11 February Ngapali

After landing by zodiac on the beach we make the short transfer to board our local small wooden boats. Travelling up the Thandwe River we weave amongst the mangroves, keeping a good eye out for birds en route, to arrive at what was once a working logging camp to see Asian elephants, now retired from their work in the nearby teak forests. We will see their peaceful life of bathing in the river and dining on huge bamboo shoots, there is of course no elephant riding these days. There will also be time to stroll along the wonderful beach, see the fishermen at the southern end and possibly visit the little local town of Thandwe.

12 February St. Martin's Island

After our exertions the previous day, today's gentle beaches, palm-fringed shores and marine life at St. Martin's Island will provide relaxation on the borders of the Andaman Sea. This is the only coral island of Bangladesh and we can swim, snorkel, visit the turtle hatchery or simply wiggle our toes in the sand relishing being away from Europe in February.

13-15 February Sundarbans

The following days will be dedicated to

the extraordinary eco systems of one of the most exciting and inaccessible wildlife areas of the world. As the World's largest area of mangrove forest, mudflats and sandbars the Sundarbans, are divided between India and Bangladesh and were designated a UNESCO world heritage site in 1987. We will have two and a half days to visit the remoter areas of the three wildlife sanctuaries in Bangladesh of this water world. European winter is deemed the best time to visit.

The vast tidal Ganges delta zone of flooded forest with elevated areas, thanks to its remoteness and difficult terrain, remains little-visited. The creeks and estuarine islands teem with varied wildlife and by using our zodiacs to the full we can explore this labyrinth of channels and waterways. Whilst a bird-spotters' paradise with over 200 species varying from kingfishers to the rare masked-finfoot, we also expect to see wild boar, jungle cat, flying foxes, spotted deer (Chital), macaques, monitor lizards, turtles, sharks, saltwater crocodiles, Indian grey mongoose, leopard cats, Ridley sea turtle, Gangetic and Irrawaddy dolphins and otters. If we are very, very lucky we might even see the highly-adapted and threatened Bengal Tiger which crosses the channels with ease, skill and stealth. In addition to the wildlife, small village communities exist and survive by collecting honey, carving wood and fishing.

The ship arrives through the Sundarbans up the Mongla River making her way to Mongla Port to clear Customs and collect our local rangers. After an initial informative walk, or zodiac tour, the ship repositions and there will be an afternoon tour. On our second and third days in this unique environment we venture further afield to explore in the early morning and evening light searching the waterways and shallow creeks. Our exact daily programme will be dictated by the tide and adapted accordingly to maximise our opportunities in this unique environment.

An added bonus of our specially chosen ship, is the Pool Deck with its bar and pool which we can enjoy whilst at anchor here. A swimming pool rather than simply a 'hot tub' is rare on an expedition ship as of course a dip in the brackish waters of the Sundarbans would not be sensible.

16 February At Sea

A day to recharge the batteries, perhaps lounge by the ship's pool, a rare treat on an expedition ship, or catch up on what we have seen whilst exploring the Sundarbans with our on-board speakers.

17 February Visakhapatnam

From this busy trading port in Andhra Pradesh, once part of both the French and British empires, we head inland to the foothills of the eastern Ghats to the Kambalakonda Wildlife Sanctuary, once the reserve of the Maharaja of Vizianagaram. The 70 square kilometres of rolling dry

forest and lakes boast a great variety of fauna, flora and birdlife, including painted spurfowl, white bellied sea eagle, banded bay cuckoo, Indian golden oriole, Asian paradise flycatcher, red wattled lapwing, laughing dove and green bee-eater. Indian leopard are also occasionally seen. Andhra Pradesh is famous for its colourful dance traditions accompanied by a variety of instruments and we will have a short display of elegant dancing before we depart.

18 February At Sea

Our final day on board offers time to hear the wrap-up lectures, swop addresses and see the recap slide show reflecting our recent days of visits, exploration and privileged activities.

19 February Chennai / London

After berthing at breakfast time in this fascinating city, closely linked with the British cotton trade, we disembark with opportunities to extend the holiday with a short flight to other parts of this fascinating country. Depart Chennai at 09.45 hrs on Emirates flight EK545 arriving Dubai at 12.40 hrs. Depart on flight EK3 at 14.30 hrs arriving London Heathrow at 18.20 hrs (suggested flights are subject to schedule change and have not been included in cost of tour).

Please note a certain level of fitness is required and certain elements of this itinerary, and/or the order of events, may well be subject to alteration due to circumstances beyond our control.

EXPEDITION PRICES

Explorer Suite	£9,745 per person
View Suite	£10,295 per person
Vista Suite	£12,585 per person
Veranda Suite	£13,790 per person (limited availability)
Medallion Suite	£16,795 per person (full)

Single Supplement

Explorer Suite	£3,780
View Suite	£4,280

Please note we have not included the cost of the flights in the tour cost. When the flight schedule has been released (March 2018) we will let you know prices including upgrades with Emirates should you wish to book them through us.

EXPEDITION COST INCLUDES

Accommodation throughout, all meals on board the ship, drinks on board (non-premium wines, beers, spirits and soft drinks are included throughout the day. A premium wine list is also available at an additional charge), gratuities for ship's crew, shore visits with local guides, tips and transport as listed, entrance fees, portage, services of tour escort and guest speakers, one year's membership of the Durrell Wildlife Conservation Trust and a donation to the Trust.

NOT INCLUDED

International flights London / Yangon and Chennai / London (approximately £600 per person including taxes for Economy Class), meals before or after disembarkation, travel insurance, visa costs (where applicable), items of personal expenditure (e.g. telephone calls / laundry / bar etc.), government levies or taxes introduced after costing and publication of this programme February 2018.



"People have asked if, in these circumstances, it is still right to carry on visiting Myanmar and supporting their young people. Let me answer with a categoric yes. Shunning Myanmar just as the country faces a serious crisis would, I believe, be both wrong and counter-productive. Wrong because we would be letting down a new generation keen to widen their horizons. And self-defeating in that it is only through international exposure that we can equip the next generation with the awareness and skills needed to tackle the root causes of ethnic unrest."

Robert Gordon CMG, OBE.
British Ambassador to Burma 1995-1999. Head of South East Asia Department, FCO 1999-2003



SILVER DISCOVERER

The 120-guest Silver Discoverer cruise ship is the perfect platform for viewing these saline worlds, with all ocean-view suites and plenty of deck space so that a breaching whale or a pod of dolphins is always within sight. Silver Discoverer's shallow draught allows her to navigate closer to shore, and with a fleet of 12 zodiacs, guests can land on isolated shores and explore wetlands and submerged ecosystems, up-close and in-depth. The ship has an excellent expedition team, attentive service, imaginative food and all the amenities of superlative Silversea style including butler service, a beauty salon, massage room and fitness centre and onboard swimming pool.

DECK 7 Beauty salon / Massage Room / Fitness Centre



DECK 6 The Bridge



DECK 5 Pool / The Grill / The Discoverer Lounge



DECK 4 The Explorer Lounge / Lobby / Reception



DECK 3 The Restaurant / Medical Room



SUITE CATEGORIES

- Medallion Suite
- Veranda Suite
- Vista Suite
- View Suite
- Explorer Suite

