

ultimatecruising.com.au or call us on 1300 485 846

FROM

**\$16,920<sub>pp</sub>**

Package #284

Step aboard Silversea Cruises' luxurious small expedition ship, Silver Explorer, for a magical journey as we follow the coral south to Middleton Reef and deep dive – literally – into an underwater world of prismatic beauty. If all the subaquatic activity gets too much for you, then you'll enjoy the spectacular traditional dances on Vanuatu's black-beached terra firma. A tale of islands in the blue, this is a true voyage to the ends of the earth.

Departing from Cairns, we visit the Whitsunday Islands before heading towards Norfolk Island, with a stop at Middleton Reef en route. Then it's onward to the gorgeous islands of Vanuatu, with visits to Mystery Island, Anelghowat, Aniwa Island, Tanna, Makura Island and Ambrym Island. Finally, we stop at Sawa-i-lau in Fiji before disembarking in Lautoka. See below for more details on each of the ports of call.

Sixteen nights of luxury, discovering and indulging! This cruise is all inclusive of meals, beverages, excursions, butler service and more!

### **PACKAGE INCLUSIONS**

Your cruise package includes:

- Transfer from airport/hotel to port
- 16 night luxury cruise aboard Silversea's Silver Explorer
- All meals on board
- Beverages in-suite and throughout the ship, including champagne, select wines and spirits
- In-room dining and room service
- Butler service in every suite
- Guided Zodiac, land and sea tours, and shoreside activities lead by the Expeditions Team
- Enrichment lectures by a highly qualified Expeditions Team
- Onboard gratuities

### **PLUS! Ultimate Cruising guests also receive:**

- 1 night accommodation in Cairns pre-cruise
- Chauffeur driven luxury car transfer from your home to the airport and return (within 35km)

### **YOUR SHIP**

Silver Explorer is expedition cruising at its very best. With just 144 guests and personalised service (nearly one crew member for every guest!), Silver Explorer is an elegant mix of adventure and luxury. A fleet of 12 Zodiac boats allows Silversea Expedition guests to visit even the most off-the-beaten path locations and an expert Expedition Team provides insight to each luxury cruise adventure.

Silversea offers butler service in every stateroom, exquisite dining, onboard entertainment and superb facilities. You will never want to go home!

### **CRUISE HIGHLIGHTS**

#### **HOLBOURNE ISLAND**

Holbourne Island is some 40 kilometers north of Bowen (Queensland) and is the most northern and remote island of the greater Whitsunday region. This continental island actually is a 33 ha national park and its surrounding waters are protected as a Marine Conservation Park, part of the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area. Holbourne Island National Park shows rocky escarpments, two sandy beaches and somewhat sheltered coral reefs. The vegetation ranges from vine thickets on the shore to grasslands and stunted shrubs on the hillsides with a small forest of Pisonia trees. The beaches offer nesting ground for green turtles and flatback turtles. From October to March coastal and migratory birds visit the reef flats and beaches as stopover points to roost, feed or breed during their annual migration. Terns, boobies, frigatebirds and noddies are most commonly seen, but Eastern Ospreys and White-bellied Sea-Eagle have been recorded, too.

#### **HARDY REEF**

Part of the Great Barrier Reef near the Whitsundays, Hardy Reef's kaleidoscopic beauty is well documented. Warm waters house a technicolour world so flamboyant that it is no wonder that it has been atop travellers' wish list for years. Considered one of the seven wonders of the natural world, Australia's Great Barrier Reef is one of the greatest natural beauties there is. Composed of over 2,900

individual reefs and 900 islands it stretches for over 2,300 kilometres. Larger than the Great Wall of China, greater in size than the United Kingdom, Holland and Switzerland combined (and roughly half the size of Texas), it is the only living thing on earth that can be seen from outer space. So suffice to say, that the Great Barrier Reef is big both above and beneath the water. And Hardy Reef is one of the jewels in its crown.

### **AIRLIE BEACH**

With the finest powder sand, knots of deep green rainforest and ankle-deep shelves of turquoise sea water - Airlie Beach is your gateway to some of the world's most spectacular beaches. This lively town welcomes wide-eyed young adventurers and the yachting crowd alike to the Whitsunday Islands' serenity, and the hiss of espresso machines, and excited chatter of adventure, spills out from its many cafes and bars. Relax at Airlie Beach Lagoon – the social hub of this town - where sun-heated saltwater invites you to wade, before flaming fresh coral trout over a barbecue as the sun sets. Or, take a seat at one of the glorious restaurants offering uninterrupted views out over the waters of Pioneer Bay, towards the 74 islands that make up the Whitsundays. These heavenly waters don't just attract humans. Humpback and pilot whales also migrate here to indulge in the warm waters and sheltered location.

### **PERCY ISLAND**

Some 120 kilometers southeast of Mackay, the Percy Isles –visited and named by Matthew Flinders in 1802- are one of the seven groups of the Northumberland Islands chain. Middle Percy Island was used to provide timber and water, while in 1874 goats were introduced to provide food for passing ships. Although Northeast Percy and South Percy Island were already national parks in the mid-20th century, the Percy Isles National Park (3,518 hectares) within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area was only declared in 2010. The forested Middle Percy Island (2,000 hectares) has mostly rocky shores with sandy beaches and sand dunes on the southern side, with the exception of palm-fringed West Bay. This is where the Percy Island Yacht Club's A-frame can be seen. This large structure is quite famous as it has a remarkable collection of nautical memorabilia –each visiting yachts seems to leave a memento behind.

### **CAPRICORNIA CAYS NATIONAL PARK**

Some 120 kilometers southeast of Mackay, the Percy Isles –visited and named by Matthew Flinders in 1802- are one of the seven groups of the Northumberland Islands chain. Middle Percy Island was used to provide timber and water, while in 1874 goats were introduced to provide food for passing ships. Although Northeast Percy and South Percy Island were already national parks in the mid-20th century, the Percy Isles National Park (3,518 hectares) within the Great Barrier Reef World Heritage Area was only declared in 2010. The forested Middle Percy Island (2,000 hectares) has mostly rocky shores with sandy beaches and sand dunes on the southern side, with the exception of palm-fringed West Bay. This is where the Percy Island Yacht Club's A-frame can be seen. This large structure is quite famous as it has a remarkable collection of nautical memorabilia –each visiting yachts seems to leave a memento behind.

### **MIDDLETON REEF**

Middleton Reef is one of two reefs comprising the Elizabeth and Middleton Reefs Marine National Nature Reserve. This nature reserve was additionally declared a Ramsar Wetland of International Importance. Middleton is one of the southernmost open-ocean coral reef platforms in the world and the peak of one of the volcanic seamounts which form the Lord Howe Island volcanic chain. Only a small sand cay exists, but the few Common Noddies that breed at the reserve do so on one of the wrecks. The reef is some 555 kilometers due west of the Australian coast and some 220 kilometers north of Lord Howe. This remote location of Middleton and the combination of cold currents in winter and warm currents in summer have brought forth a number of endemics –it contains the last known large population of black cod and more than 300 tropical and subtropical fish species have been registered.

### **NORFOLK ISLAND**

750 kilometers northwest of New Zealand and 1400 kilometers east of Gold Coast, NSW, Norfolk Island, an External Territory of Australia consisting of Norfolk Island and uninhabited Phillip Island and Nepean Island, was self-governed until 2015 when it came under the laws of New South Wales. Discovered by Captain Cook in 1774, the island has had different settlements, starting with Polynesians that had already disappeared before Cook's visit, followed by convicts and soldiers in 1788. This penal colony was abandoned in 1814 yet used again from 1825 to 1855. The Kingston and Arthur's Vale Historic Area, with its elegantly restored Georgian houses at Quality Row, is among the 11 historic Australian Convict Sites, UNESCO World Heritage. Most of today's population can be traced back to the 194 descendants of the Bounty mutineers and their Tahitian wives who had left Pitcairn for Norfolk in 1856.

### **MYSTERY ISLAND, VANUATU**

Inyeug Island, better known as Mystery Island, is part of the Tafea Province of Vanatu, the southernmost collection of islands. This is a picturesque island with large rounded cliffs jutting from the water. The cliffs create protected lagoons with some of the lightest, clearest waters in the world. The island is, with the exception of an airstrip used twice weekly, made up entirely of beaches and reefs. This place is ideal for relaxing, swimming and snorkelling in the tranquil waters, where many diverse tropical fishes hide between the corals.

### **ANELGHOWAT, VANUATU**

Vanuatu's southernmost inhabited island, Aneityum, is a little tropical island paradise. The interior of the island is mountainous and covered with forest and exists at a slightly cooler climate than the rest of the island. Aneityum rests upon two coalescing volcanoes, although volcanic activity ceased long ago, during the late-Pleistocene to Holocene era. Along the coast, pine plantations contrast with coconut palms, white sand beaches and coral reefs. Aneghowat is the main settlement on the southwestern side of Aneityum, though it is a small and simple town, as the entire island only has a population of approximately 900 people.

### **ANIWA ISLAND, VANUATU**

Aniwa is a small uplifted coral platform in the southernmost province of Vanuatu. A vivid coral reef has formed here in recent times and grows now where tongues of lava once overran the volcanic slopes and flowed into the ocean. As the corals, sponges and anemones overgrow the dark lava rock, schools of vivid reef fish cruise above.

## **WAISISI, VANUATU**

Waisisi is a bay and a village located on Tanna's eastern shore. The black sandy beach –an indication of the volcanic activity of the island- and the lush forest belie the fact that this has been an important site in the White Sands region. A famous war was fought here and a tree planted to mark the end of it can still be seen. This area is also home to the John Frum Cargo Cult. Waisisi will be the gateway to see Mount Yasur -the most accessible explosive volcano in the world. Locals believe their spirit god dwells in there so it is a sacred place to the local tribes. The volcanic firework display at sunset is awe-inspiring.

## **MAKURA ISLAND**

Conjuring up a tropical island might well bring to mind the island of Makura in the Shepherds Islands of Vanuatu. Makura is small, but it is actually the peak of a primeval volcano. The other existing ramparts of the volcanic rim are believed to be the neighboring islands of Emae and Mataso. Roughly 3,000 people call the Shepherds Islands home and Makura Island is one of these populated islands. The easy-going islanders live in a small village on the northwestern part of the island amidst a rugged volcanic backdrop.

## **AMBRYM ISLAND**

Unlike Espiritu Santo with its raised coral reefs and white sand, Ambrym is a volcanically active island with dark sand beaches. Ambrym is known as the island of magic and is the source of five local languages that all evolved on Ambrym. This handful of languages contributes to the well over 100 languages of Vanuatu. Some of Ambrym's magic takes place in the lush greenery of the local community of Ranon. Here the people perform a very special and traditional 'Rom' dance. Participants prepare their masks and costumes in secrecy and the dance is reserved for special occasions.

## **SAWA-I-LAU, FIJI**

Part of the northern Yasawa Islands, Sawa-i-Lau is just south of the archipelago's largest island, Yasawa. Access to the island is via Buasali Bay with Tamasua and Nabukeru being the closest villages. Part of Nabukeru's families are the owners of Sawa-i-Lau. Unlike the other, major islands which are of volcanic origin, Sawa-i-Lau is an impressive limestone island with steep sides rising high into the air. At its western shore a small beach permits access via some concrete steps to the main attraction: several remarkable caves.

Once one has passed the door guarding the entrance to the island's interior, shafts of light illuminate a dome-shaped cave connected underwater to the ocean. Apart from enjoying the natural pool which has a depth of some three meters, intrepid swimmers/snorkelers can head for a second cave which has to be accessed via a low tunnel which at high tide is below water level.

## **LAUTOKA, FIJI**

It doesn't get much sweeter than arriving on the sun-soaked shores of the Sugar City. Fiji's second-biggest settlement opens up a world of blissful beaches and turquoise seascapes, while its dense jungle lures the adventurous deep into its embrace. Step ashore where the first Fijians landed, and you'll understand instantly why they chose to make this island paradise their heavenly home. Experience rich Fijian life, and see dramatic displays like warrior dances, and remarkable local practices like firewalks, which kick up burning embers into the night's sky. Legend says the city took its name after two chiefs faced each other in a duel. A spear pierced one of the chiefs, leading to the shout of 'lau-toka!' or 'spear hit!' Sugar is Lautoka's main trade, but its botanical gardens are a sweet insight into the tropical plant life that thrives here - from pearl white lilies to tall, fragrant orchids.

## **DEPARTURE DATES & PRICING**

Departs Cairns 10 September 2021.

Prices start from A\$16,920 per person twin share, including an early booking bonus. Pricing can change on a day to day basis as the ship fills up so please ask us to check the latest availability and the best available pricing.

### Cruise Category

- Luxury Expedition

### Onboard Features

- 24 Hr Room Service
- Boutique &/or Salon
- Drinks All Day
- Gratuities
- On-Board Lecturer
- Shore Excursions
- Speciality Restaurants

---

### trip itinerary

Day 1

Cairns

Day 2

Holbourne Island & Whitsundays

Day 3

Whitsundays (Hardy Reef) & Airlie Beach

Day 4

Percy Island

Day 5

Capricornia Cays National Park

Day 6  
At Sea  
Day 7  
Middleton Reef  
Day 8  
At Sea  
Day 9  
Norfolk Island  
Day 10  
At Sea  
Day 11  
Mystery Island & Anelghowat  
Day 12  
Aniwa Island and Waisisi  
Day 13  
Makura Island, Vanuatu  
Day 14  
Ambrym Island, Vanuatu  
Day 15  
At Sea  
Day 16  
Sawa-i-lau, Fiji  
Day 17  
Lautoka  
The Vessel

## Technical Details

- Crew 117
- Capacity 132
- Length 108M

## Cruise Category

- Luxury Expeditions
- Modern Style

### Silver Explorer

Silversea's purpose-built luxury Silver Explorer expedition cruise ship has been designed specifically for navigating waters in some of the world's most remote destinations, including both of earth's polar regions. A strengthened hull with a Lloyd's Register ice-class notation (1A) for passenger vessels enables the Silver Explorer Expedition Cruise Ship to safely push through ice floes with ease. Images courtesy of Silversea.

### Vessel Features

- **24 Hr Room Service**
- **Medical Services**

□□□□□□□□□□

ultimatecruising.com.au or call us on 1300 485 846