

P R E S S R E L E A S E

7th October, 2008

Orion's Spice Islands Voyage of Discovery to lands lost in time.

This Orion Voyage of Discovery visits one of the most extraordinarily bio-diverse regions on Earth. The Moluccas, once known as the Spice Islands and now Maluku, is a rarely visited collection of islands situated just north of Australia between New Guinea and Timor. Few outsiders ever set foot here.

Being part of Wallacea, the legendary deep water area that separates the Australian and Asian continental plates, it is home to many unique flora and fauna species, particularly birdlife. Towering volcanoes rising from the depths of the sea, stunning islands, vibrant reefs and ancient cultures mark this amazing expedition.

Magellan and Vasco da Gama opened the way for Europeans, building a profitable trade based on rare spices including cloves, nutmeg and mace. Archaeology has shown that more than 3000 years ago cloves from the Moluccas were traded in Persia and the Romans were able to buy spices from the remote east of Indonesia.

The island of Alor is a must-do destination for adventurous scuba divers, the coral reef complex being in pristine condition - while ashore, the predominantly Christian villagers are friendly and their culture strong. The existence of Moko drums, not found in large numbers anywhere else in Indonesia, can be traced back to the Dongson period in Vietnam around 350 BC.

The residents of Sumba, an uplifted coral limestone island once known as Sandalwood Island by early European traders, retain a strong cultural heritage resistant to the outside influences of Christianity, Hinduism or Islam. Orion's guests will be welcomed by Sumba villagers wearing traditional woven ikat fabrics to see imposing ancient stone carvings and megaliths that adorn the entrances to Sumba villages.

Orion's guests will see pre-historic creatures at world renowned Komodo National Park, established in 1980 to conserve the unique Komodo dragon. These imposing lizards are among the world's largest reptiles, growing to over 3 metres long and weighing over 70kg.

Remote Pink Beach, so named because of crushed red organ pipe coral sand, is perfect for swimming, snorkelling, sea kayaking or just relaxing on the beach - options available to make the most of time spent on this stunning beach.

Sitting just offshore from Sumbawa, opposite the towering volcano of Tambora, Satonda is an uninhabited natural paradise. The island itself is an emerging volcano featuring a lake that has formed in its crater. Hundreds of fruit bats call

Satonda home and at dusk the sky turns black as they leave their roosts for the evening.

Kenanga, a small fishing village on the coast of Sumbawa, provides another chance to experience culture and lifestyle on this fascinating voyage. Mix with the local people and visit the school and a local fish hatchery. Tambora volcano, towering over the coast of Sumbawa, is known for the largest eruption recorded in history.

This Orion Spice Islands Voyage of Discovery has caught the imagination of Orion's Expedition Team. The heady blend of local culture, European discovery, geology, unique flora and fauna all wrapped and presented in a series of beautiful islands largely lost in time promises to be a voyage of a lifetime.

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Spice Islands Adventure – 10 September 2009 - 9 nights. Darwin, Maluku, Alor, Waingapu (Sumba Island), Komodo, Satonda Island, Sumbawa, Bali (Benoa).

Fares Guide:

Fares begin from \$6,365 per person for an ocean view Category B Stateroom

Suites begin from \$8,775 per person for a Junior Suite

Owners' Suites with French Balcony are \$13,325 per person

An additional fuel charge of \$50 per person per night applies

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Orion information:

The cataclysmic volcanic eruption of Tambora in April 1815 was the most powerful eruption in recorded history; greater even than the legendary Krakatoa eruption of 1883.

Tambora's resulting volcanic cloud lowered global temperatures by as much as 3 **degrees °C, and a year later most of the northern hemisphere experienced** sharply cooler temperatures during the summer months. In parts of Europe and in North America, 1816 was known as "the year without a summer."

From: Kious and Tilling, 1996, This Dynamic Earth: The Story of Plate Tectonics: USGS

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Ranked #2 expedition cruise ship in the world in the 2009 Berlitz Cruise Guide, Orion is the world's latest and Australia's only purpose-built luxury expedition cruise ship.

With 75 crew and a maximum of just 106 passengers Orion offers the highest staff to guest ratio and guest to public space ratio of any ship based in Australian waters.

Further information on Orion Expedition Cruises can be obtained by visiting the website www.orionexpeditions.com

For reservations or to obtain a brochure call Orion Expedition Cruises: 61-2 9033 8777 (Sydney callers) 1300 361 012 (regional and interstate) or your travel agent. Email: info@orioncruises.com.au

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