National Geographic Orion to explore French Polynesia and South Pacific

Lindblad Expeditions will deploy National Geographic Orion to French Polynesia and the South Pacific in 2018. Five new itineraries will operate from March through August.

Passengers will get ample opportunities to dive and snorkel some of the world's most pristine seas. The 102-passenger National Geographic Orion is outfitted with exploration tools including snorkeling gear for all travelers, a scuba program that can accommodate up to 24 divers at a time with two dive masters, a glass bottom boat, kayaks, paddleboards, a remotely operated vehicle that reaches depths of up to 1,000 feet and a fleet of Zodiacs.

Passengers who book any French Polynesia and South Pacific departures by March 31, 2017, will get free international economy round-trip airfare from Los Angeles.

'Easter Island to Tahiti: Tales of the Pacific,' 18 days, includes Easter Island, the Pitcairn Islands, the 'low islands' of the Tuamotu Archipelago and Tahiti. Passengers can dive or snorkel the stunning reefs of Fakarava, part of a UNESCO Biosphere Reserve, and the Pitcairn Islands, identified as one of most unspoiled reef systems in the world. They also can explore the unusual geology and wildlife of Henderson Island, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and look for endemic bird species.

Departures are March 27 and Aug. 30, 2018. Fares start at $17,990.

'Azure Seas from Tahiti to the Marquesas,' 16 days, provides an in-depth exploration of the Marquesas. Passengers can discover the verdant, saw-toothed basalt pinnacles of the Marquesas that hide waterfalls so high the water evaporates before hitting the ground, explore limestone waterline caves and grottos, search for rare birds on the coastline and venture further inland to see ancient stone sculptures. They also can dive or snorkel the reefs of Fakarava.


'Epic Polynesia: Cook Islands to Fiji,' 16 days, heads to the western reaches of Polynesia and explores from the verdant crags of Tahiti to the vibrant reefs of Fiji. Travelers can snorkel and dive colorful reefs in five Pacific nations—French Polynesia, Cook Islands, Samoa, Wallis and Futuna and Fiji.

Departures are May 10 and May 24, 2018. Rates start at $15,680.

A nine-day program, 'French Polynesia: Beyond the Postcard,' ventures into the heart of Polynesian culture and wilderness. Travelers can kayak, paddle board or bike ride for independent exploration. They'll visit one of the most important cultural sites in the Polynesian world, Marae Taputapuatea on Raiatea, where seafarers began their expeditions that eventually led to populating Hawaii and New Zealand. The ship will sail among some of the 80 atolls of the Tuamotu Archipelago and navigate Tiputa Pass into the lagoon at Rangiroa, one of the world's largest atolls.

Departures are April 12, April 26, June 7, July 5, July 19 and Aug. 2, 2018, with fares starting at $7,690.

Another nine-day adventure, 'Isles, Atolls and Pristine Corals: Southern Line Islands,' is an expedition from Rangiroa's lagoon to the verdant peaks of Tahiti's neighbor, Moorea. This compact voyage maximizes travelers' time in some of the most vibrant undersea sites in the world. It is one of the healthiest reef systems in the world.
and a rare place virtually unmarred by humans, which is why it was identified by the National Geographic Pristine Seas project as one of the few places researchers can study to see how reefs and undersea ecosystems looked before humans.

Departures are April 19, May 3, June 14, July 12, July 26 and Aug. 9, 2018. Rates begin at $7,690.

Prices include all activities, bar tab and staff gratuities. Passengers who book two or more voyages get a 10% discount.