

# The Med, *but more*

Add a little something extra to entice repeat visitors on a Mediterranean cruise with a twist, says Jane Archer

Almost two-thirds of all those who cruise in the Mediterranean sail on big ships that hold thousands of passengers and visit the likes of Naples, Livorno and Marseille, because those are the ports large enough to take big ships – and most travellers want to tick off Pompeii, Florence, Pisa and Provence.

That might suit first-time cruisers, but agents should be looking for something different for clients coming back for a second, third or even fourth visit. They can suggest smaller ships, little-known and less-crowded ports, or trips with a twist – a food-themed voyage, say, or one with walking tours instead of coach trips. ➔

PICTURE: © CANAL



FROM LEFT: Fira, Santorini; a JRE chef on SH Diana; Seven Seas Voyager in Capri; Syros, Greece  
PREVIOUS PAGE: Perast, Montenegro



## SHORE TIME

**Battlefields, olive trees and catacombs – there are Mediterranean excursions to suit all interests this year.**

🕒 Visit the Second World War battlefield of El Alamein on a six-hour tour from Alexandria in Egypt, which Azamara is visiting on an 11-night cruise round-trip from Piraeus (Athens) in September.

🕒 History, hiking and the world's oldest olive tree await on a four-hour hike from Bar, Montenegro, which Celebrity Cruises is visiting for the first time this autumn on two round-trip cruises from Civitavecchia (Rome).

🕒 Head to the dark side on a 3.5-hour tour of the catacombs in the Sicilian capital of Palermo, a new port for Virgin Voyages on a seven-night sailing from Barcelona to Civitavecchia (Rome) in June.

## ONE CRUISE, ONE COUNTRY

Most cruise itineraries visit multiple destinations, but what if customers prefer a voyage where they can get to know a single country in depth? Azamara's country-intensive cruises allow them to do just that. Since they cruise along just one coastline, ships can stay late or overnight in lots of ports, letting passengers see and do more. The line has 18 intensive cruises this year, mostly in Spain and Greece, but a few in France, Italy and Croatia too. There are 19 to come in 2026, when Croatia loses its standalone cruise status and is paired up with neighbouring Montenegro. [azamara.com](http://azamara.com)

## CHEFS ON BOARD AND ASHORE

Expedition line Swan Hellenic is swapping polar adventures for culinary escapades this summer with three gourmet cruises in the Mediterranean in partnership with JRE-Jeunes Restaurateurs, an association of young restaurateurs and chefs. On each cruise, JRE chefs will cook signature dishes, host cooking shows and lead culinary-themed tours ashore that will let guests, for instance,

discover culinary techniques in Tunisia and learn to cook like a Croatian.

Atlas Ocean Voyages is another polar expedition line offering foodie adventures in the Med this summer (see box). It is running 10 Epicurean Expeditions from May to October (as well as others in the Canaries and western Europe), each accompanied by chefs, winemakers and culinary experts, who host tastings, cookery demonstrations and contests on board, and join passengers on culinary-focused trips ashore. [swanhellenic.com](http://swanhellenic.com)  
[atlasoceanvoyages.com](http://atlasoceanvoyages.com)

## CRUISE AND WALK

Adding an extra dimension to a Mediterranean cruise, Ramble Worldwide has packaged three of Fred Olsen Cruise Lines' new autumn Mediterranean fly-cruises with guided walks of between three and eight miles on most days. The holidays are for 14 to 16 people and graded so customers can decide which best suits their abilities. Tour leaders will host briefings each evening to let customers know what to expect the next day. Options include a nine-night Greek Odyssey voyage from Dubrovnik to Rhodes with

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an eight-mile cliff hike from Fira to Oia in Santorini, and there is a 10-night Islands, Rivas and Peninsulas sailing from Valencia to Civitavecchia (Rome) with a six-mile coastal walk in Mahón. Prices from £2,549 and £2,649 respectively, including flights. [rambleworldwide.co.uk](http://rambleworldwide.co.uk)

## WHO DO YOU THINK YOU ARE?

The world of genetics, genealogy and DNA comes to the Mediterranean this autumn on a 14-night voyage from Fusina (Venice) to Civitavecchia (Rome) on Regent Seven Seas Cruises' *Seven Seas Voyager*. The cruise, in partnership with Ancestry.com, is one of six new spotlight cruises the line is offering in the Med this year and next; the others focus on food, wine and jewellery-making.

Hosted by Ancestry genealogists, it will include free presentations, Q&A sessions and 30-minute consultations on how to learn more about your ancestors and your DNA. Passengers can sign up for a 50-minute one-on-one session to have their family memories recorded for \$250. The cruise departs October 31 and costs from £4,914 including drinks, tips,

speciality dining, shore excursions and Wi-Fi. Flight and transfers are extra. [rssc.com](http://rssc.com)

## GO SMALL

Small ship *Caledonian Sky* is returning to the Med after several years Down Under with a summer season of new cruises under APT's Travelmarvel brand. The vessel holds 110 passengers and will be visiting offbeat ports such as Syros in Greece, Otranto in Italy and Canakkale in Turkey. Cruises range from eight to 15 days and cost from £3,295, including flights.

Slightly larger, by just two passengers, are SeaDream Yacht Club's *SeaDream I* and *SeaDream II*, which will be in the Mediterranean this summer and again in 2026, when they visit seven new ports, offering overnight stays in the likes of Cassis in France and Hvar in Croatia as part of the line's first-ever two-week Med cruises. The Grand Mediterranean & Adriatic Explorer cruises are from Nice to Venice, and Civitavecchia (Rome) to Venice, departing May 30 and July 25, 2026, respectively. Prices are from £12,249, cruise-only. [aptouring.com](http://aptouring.com) [seadream.com](http://seadream.com)

## ask the expert



"We launched Epicurean Expeditions in the Mediterranean to help fill the ships in summer as there isn't as much demand for the Arctic as there is for Antarctica in winter. The cruises offer the same learning experience as the polar regions but, instead of an expedition team, we bring on local experts and chefs from around the world to host cooking classes, demonstrations and cook-offs with guests. It's a different way to see the Med and ideal for past cruisers as well as new-to-cruise clients who like food and wine and want new culinary experiences off the beaten track. The ships' relaxed ambience also appeals to young people."

**Bernie Carter**,  
head of international sales,  
Atlas Ocean Voyages

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