



Unexpected *adventures*

Tahuata, French Polynesia

PICTURE: Sara Barbieri



Expedition cruising has grown over recent years to encompass all kinds of travel experiences, writes **Jane Archer**

One of the most exciting aspects of warm-water expedition cruises – for both itinerary planners and adventurous travellers who have ticked off the polar regions – is that with a bit of imagination, almost anywhere can be made to fit the bill.

Whether it's a repositioning cruise that offers a rare chance of cultural discovery, a small-ship sailing that goes off the usual tourist trail or even an adventure closer to home, this new wave of expeditions shows that you can bring an adventurous mindset to pretty much any destination you like.

SOUTH PACIFIC AND MELANESIA

To most people, the South Pacific is a tropical paradise with islands, beaches, palm trees and lazy days in the sun. They're not wrong, but those

visiting on an expedition cruise will discover a lot more as itineraries seek out remote spots where tourists are a rarity and trips ashore delve into local culture and nature.

Heritage Expeditions squeezes a handful of voyages visiting the Melanesian islands of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu in between seasons spent in the Kimberley and the Antarctic.

Scenic, which bills its trips as 'discovery cruises' rather than expeditions when in warm-water locations, is exploring the South Pacific in spring 2028 as three voyages take *Scenic Eclipse II* from Valparaiso in Chile to Cairns and on to the Kimberley.

New in winter 2026–27, Ponant has 15-day sailings on exploration ship *Le Jacques Cartier* that explore

the Tuamotu, Marquesas, Austral, Gambier and Pitcairn Islands. Daily excursions introduce passengers to Polynesian culture, visit sacred *marae* (temples) and get close to limestone caves frequented by humpback whales. Prices from £9,240 in December include drinks, Wi-Fi and one excursion a day.

UK AND IRELAND

Most Brits probably don't think of the UK as expedition territory, but Silversea decided otherwise when it launched adventures around the British Isles in 2025, and now Polar Latitudes Expeditions – the company formed from last year's merger of Polar Latitudes and Albatros Expeditions – which usually sticks to the frozen north or south, is testing our not-so-icy waters. ➔

EXPEDITION



FROM LEFT: AE Expeditions visits Valletta, Malta; off-roading in Gabon [PREVIOUS PAGE](#): Chef's market visit, Seville [PICTURE](#): Atlas Ocean Voyages

Three week-long voyages in 2027 explore either Ireland (April) or Scotland (April and May) as its ships, *Ocean Victory* and *Ocean Albatros*, relocate from Antarctica to the Arctic. The line promises passengers will explore flagship cities and see ancient gems rarely accessed by tourists. Prices, from about £3,747, include soft drinks and beer with lunch, plus wine at dinner, and 500MB of Wi-Fi.

MEDITERRANEAN

The idea of expedition cruises in the Mediterranean is probably harder to accept than the wilds of the rugged Scottish and Irish coasts, but Atlas Ocean Voyages' *World Traveller* and AE Expeditions' *Douglas Mawson* are both there this summer.

Atlas is a Med regular, with 'epicurean expeditions' led by an expedition team and accompanied by leading chefs, with tours that take on a foodie theme such as Greek cooking lessons, pizza workshops and chef-led market visits.

AE Expeditions made its Med debut with five departures in 2025 and added more this year. Cruises have historians, art aficionados, genealogists and cultural experts to give passengers an insight into the places on the agenda. A 10-day Classical Greece: To Antiquity and Beyond cruise from Athens, departing September 7, dives into the ancient worlds of Sparta, Olympia and Argolis. Prices, from £4,448, include

transfers, two pre-cruise hotel nights in Athens, one excursion per port, beer and wine with dinner and Wi-Fi.

AFRICA

For something more adventurous, Swan Hellenic is venturing to areas of West Africa that few tourists ever visit as its ship, *SH Diana*, relocates between Antarctica and the Arctic in spring and autumn 2027.

A 13-night Cultures & Traditions of Central Africa cruise from Luanda in Angola to Accra in Ghana, departing April 9, 2027, visits Gabon, São Tomé, Príncipe and Benin with hiking,

wildlife-spotting and birdwatching cruises among available tours. Prices from £10,700 with drinks, tips, Wi-Fi and one excursion per port.

Hapag-Lloyd Cruises is going exploring in Namibia on a 16-day voyage from Cape Verde to Cape Town departing October 30, 2026. It's on expedition ship *Hanseatic Spirit* and includes an overnight on St Helena, the remote Atlantic island to which Napoleon was exiled in 1815 after the Battle of Waterloo. Prices from £3,450 include drinks from the minibar and one hour of internet a day.

INDIA

Everyone has heard of the Ganges, but how familiar might they be with the Brahmaputra? Rest assured cruises here are – literally – a wild adventure. The river rises in the Himalayas and races south through Assam so fast that sandbanks and islands are swept away before your eyes.

Luxury India specialist Adventure Resorts and Cruises has 10 or 11-night sailings on river boat *Mahabaahu* that include trips to remote villages, ancient temples, the world's largest inhabited river island and wildlife reserves where one-horned rhino, water buffalo and Bengal tigers roam. Prices from \$9,065 include transfers, tours and bottled water. It is available to book through Fred Holidays, Cox & Kings, Travelpack and other operators. ●

SELLING TIPS

Bernard Carter, international sales, Atlas Ocean Voyages, says:

- Identify which areas you want to focus on and learn everything you can about them.
- Make use of the resources available from Clia and the Expedition Cruise Network, as well as on cruise lines' websites and trade portals.
- Don't be afraid of the price – you are selling the experience.
- Decide who the expeditions will appeal to and reach out to potential clients, including those who have never cruised.