

# SKEPTIC

With Distinguished Guest Lecturer  
**PROFESSOR JARED DIAMOND**



## WESTERN EUROPE'S HISTORIC COASTAL CITIES

Aboard the New Expedition Cruise Ship *DIANA*

**May 13-25, 2026**

Belgium's Bruges is one of Europe's best  
preserved and most evocative medieval cities



# SKEPTIC

Dear Friends,

We are delighted to invite you to join us on this voyage along Europe's Atlantic coast from southern Iberia to the North Sea, exploring ports that have long connected Western Europe to the wider world and that serve as repositories for some of its finest cultural and artistic achievements.

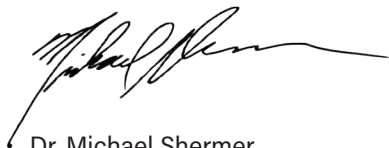
Sailing northward from Lisbon, we explore a carefully curated group of sites that represent essential elements of the European legacy, spanning centuries from the medieval castles and cathedrals of Portugal and Spain to the vineyards of Bordeaux and the beaches of Normandy. Among the places we visit are no fewer than six UNESCO World Heritage Sites—Lisbon's Jerónimos Monastery; the historic University of Coimbra; the great Christian pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela; the architectural masterpieces of Romanesque Oviedo and Neoclassical Bordeaux; and the virtual open-air museum that is Bruges. In addition to these justly famous landmarks and monuments, other highlights include a day visiting the wine-producing châteaux of the Médoc and, in Normandy, discovering the medieval town of Bayeux and the proud city of Caen, rebuilt after the near total destruction of World War II.

Accompanying us throughout the voyage will be special guest lecturer **Jared Diamond**, Pulitzer Prize-winning author of some of the most influential books of the late 20th and early 21st centuries. In a series of lectures and discussions, Jared will bring his experience and expertise to bear in providing insight into the significance of the history and culture we encounter.

Our vessel for this extraordinary journey, the Swan Hellenic *Diana*, is a state-of-the-art, new-generation expedition cruise ship, launched in early 2023. Accommodating only 192 guests in beautifully appointed staterooms and balcony suites, *Diana* features several lounges, a restaurant, outdoor café, spa, library and beauty salon, and is equipped with the latest safety and environmentally friendly technology.

Please take a moment to look over the enclosed brochure and then begin making plans to join Jared Diamond and fellow travelers next spring as we explore *Western Europe's Historic Coastal Cities*.

Warm regards,



Dr. Michael Shermer  
Executive Director  
The Skeptics Society

P.S. 9% of your cruise fee will be a tax-deductible donation to The Skeptics Society – a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

## DISTINGUISHED GUEST LECTURER

### JARED DIAMOND



**Jared Diamond** is a Pulitzer Prize-winning author of six best-selling books, translated into 38 languages, about human societies and human evolution: *Guns, Germs, and Steel*; *Collapse*; *Why Is Sex Fun?*; *The Third Chimpanzee*; *The World Until Yesterday*, and *Upheaval*. As a professor of geography at UCLA

(University of California at Los Angeles), he is known for his breadth of interests, which involves conducting research and teaching in three other fields: the biology of New Guinea birds, digestive physiology, and conservation biology. His prizes and honors include the U.S. National Medal of Science, the Pulitzer Prize for Non-fiction, the Tyler Prize for Environmental Science, and election to the U.S. National Academy of Sciences. He is a director of World Wildlife Fund/U.S. and of Conservation International. As a biological explorer, his most widely publicized finding was his rediscovery, at the top of New Guinea's remote Foja Mountains, of the long-lost Golden-fronted Bowerbird, previously known only from four specimens found in a Paris feather shop in 1895.



Jerónimos Monastery, Lisbon, Portugal





# THE NEW 192-GUEST EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP *DIANA*



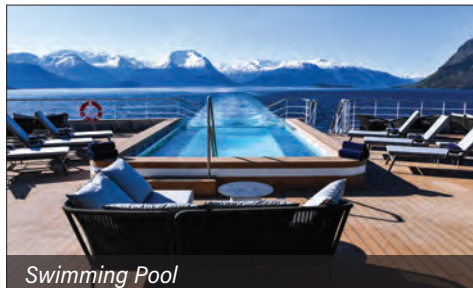
Oceanview Stateroom



Balcony Suite



Swan Restaurant



Swimming Pool



Observation Lounge

Built in Finland, and launched in April 2023, Swan Hellenic's *Diana* is a new generation expedition cruise ship. Although at 12,100 tons the ship is large enough to accommodate more than 350 passengers, *Diana* will accommodate a maximum of 192 guests in 96 spacious staterooms and balcony suites. The low guest density results in one of the most generous indoor and outdoor space-to-guest ratios among cruise ships.

Featuring the latest advances in technology and engineering, *Diana* is among the world's first environmentally responsible ships. Equipped with hybrid engines and a unique water filtration system, *Diana* leaves a minimal footprint. For cruising in Polar regions, the ship meets the stringent requirements of the new Polar Code with its high PC5 Category A ice strengthened hull and other advanced features. A computer-controlled Dynamic Positioning System allows the ship to maintain position without anchoring. Operated by a complement of 135 experienced European officers and international crew members, *Diana* will

carry a fleet of Zodiacs, versatile landing boats, and kayaks. Powerful stabilizers provide a smooth ride.

*Diana's* interior spaces exude sophisticated elegance, with most rooms opening to panoramic views of the sea. All staterooms and suites face outside and are equipped with private facilities, climate control, TV, Wi-Fi and USB connections and other amenities. Of the ship's 96 staterooms, 76 have balconies. Public areas include a spacious observation lounge equipped with state-of-the-art facilities for lectures and presentations; a club lounge; a restaurant that accommodates all guests at one seating; an outdoor café/bar that surrounds the heated swimming pool; a wellness area with gym, spa, and sauna with an adjoining outdoor jacuzzi; library; beauty salon; and an infirmary that is attended by a full-time doctor and nurse. The ship also features expansive open-deck areas. Two elevators connect all decks. Attentive service is provided on a 24-hour basis. The outstanding cuisine is complemented by fine wines at lunch and dinner.



# ITINERARY



Wednesday, May 13, 2026  
**DEPART THE UNITED STATES**

Thursday, May 14  
**LISBON, Portugal**

Arrive in Lisbon and transfer to the *Avenida Palace Hotel* (or similar), our home for the night. Join fellow travelers this evening for a welcome dinner. (D)

Friday, May 15  
**LISBON/EMBARKATION**

Following breakfast at the hotel, set off on a panoramic tour of



Medieval streets of Santillana del Mar in Spain

Lisbon's highlights, including the Belém Quarter and the Jerónimos Monastery, a superb example of the Portuguese Manueline style of architecture and a UNESCO World Heritage Site. Also see the Monument of Discoveries and historic Belém Tower, the point from which many Portuguese explorers, including Vasco da Gama, set sail. In the afternoon, transfer to the pier to embark *Diana* and set sail in early evening. (B,L,D)

Saturday, May 16  
**FIGUEIRA DA FOZ/COIMBRA/CONIMBRIGA**

From Figueira da Foz, travel to Coimbra, famous for its university, the oldest in Portugal and one of the oldest in Europe, a UNESCO World Heritage Site. We tour the campus and visit Coimbra's Old Town, which features a splendid Romanesque Cathedral. In nearby Conimbriga we explore the beautifully preserved Roman ruins, most of which date from the reign of Emperor Augustus, and which constitute the largest Roman site in Portugal. (B,L,D)

Sunday, May 17  
**FERROL, Spain/SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA**

Travel today to Santiago de Compostela, one of the most beautiful and historic medieval cities in Spain, a UNESCO World Heritage Site, and the third most important Christian pilgrimage site in the world, after Jerusalem and Rome. A guided tour of this remarkable town includes the Cathedral, the Townhall, and the Palace of Saint Jerome. (B,L,D)

Monday, May 18  
**GIJÓN/OVIEDO**

Arrive in Gijón. With a history stretching back to Roman antiquity, Gijón became an important industrial and maritime center in the 18th and 19th centuries. Today, Gijón is a vibrant modern city with a strong cultural identity reflected in its colorful architecture and old quarter layout. Later, enjoy an excursion to historic Oviedo. Established in the 8th century as the first Christian kingdom on the Iberian Peninsula after the reign of the Moors, Oviedo is considered a "cradle of the Reconquista." It became a political, religious, and cultural center under medieval kings like Alfonso II, who is credited with initiating the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage. Alfonso II commissioned numerous churches and palaces, many of which survive today in Oviedo as pre-Romanesque architectural masterpieces with designated UNESCO World Heritage status. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, May 19  
**SANTANDER/SANTILLANA DEL MAR**

Santillana del Mar is one of the best-preserved medieval towns in Western Europe, in part due to strict rules governing development first introduced in the 16th century. Established in the 8th century as a way station on the northern pilgrimage route to Santiago de Compostela, it is built around the Church of Santa Juliana and contains some of the best examples of Romanesque architecture in Northwestern Spain. The historic quarter's cobblestone streets are lined with grand buildings, including the Renaissance Velarde Palace and the baroque Casa de Valdivielso. (B,L,D)





**Belém Tower, Lisbon, Portugal**

**Wednesday, May 20 and Thursday, May 21**  
**BORDEAUX/THE MÉDOC, France**

*Diana* sails the Gironde Estuary of the Garonne River to Bordeaux, where it will stay in port for two days. Founded by the Celts around 300 BC, invaded by the Roman empire under Julius Caesar, sacked by Frankish Vandals and later controlled by the English crown, Bordeaux has nonetheless flourished as a center of trade and wine production for over two thousand years. At the end of the Hundred Years' War Bordeaux returned to French sovereignty and became a wealthy port in the 18th century due to lucrative trade routes with the West Indies and the Americas. The prosperity of this golden age is reflected in Bordeaux's elegant neoclassical architecture which, together with excellent urban planning, earned the city its UNESCO World Heritage Site categorization. La Cité du Vin is globally renowned as the capital of one of the world's most prestigious wine regions. We will explore Bordeaux and the fabled Médoc region to the north. Centuries of heritage as a seat of noble patronage and commerce are evident from the grand châteaux, charming villages, and picturesque stone manor houses that punctuate the rolling vineyards and pine forests of this serene rural landscape. (B,L,D)

**Friday, May 22**  
**AT SEA**

During a day at sea, attend informative lectures and briefings from Jared Diamond and onboard experts, relax and enjoy cruising the open sea, and treat yourself to some of the many amenities aboard *Diana*. (B,L,D)

**Saturday, May 23**  
**CHERBOURG/BAYEUX & CAEN**

*Diana* calls at Cherbourg on Normandy's northern coast. As one of the largest artificial harbors in the world, this deep-water port has been a strategic hub for commercial and maritime activity since its construction in the 18th and 19th centuries. Journey to Bayeux and Caen. Bayeux retains much of its medieval charm as one of the few cities in Normandy to avoid destruction during the D-Day landings. In contrast, over 75% of Caen was decimated by six weeks of heavy bombing in 1944. The German-occupied city was vital to road and river transport through the region and its capture would limit German

ability to reinforce and resupply their troops. During the Battle of Caen, the Benedictine monastery L'Abbaye aux Hommes became a refuge for thousands of civilians. The Abbey and the Château de Caen fortress (one of the largest medieval strongholds in Europe), both dating from the 11th century Norman dynasty, did withstand the bombing. Though it was ultimately a military success for the Allies, the protracted battle had a devastating impact on civilian lives. The post-WWII reconstruction of Caen is a testament to the resilience of the city and its people. (B,L,D)

**Sunday, May 24**  
**OSTEND/BRUGES, Belgium**

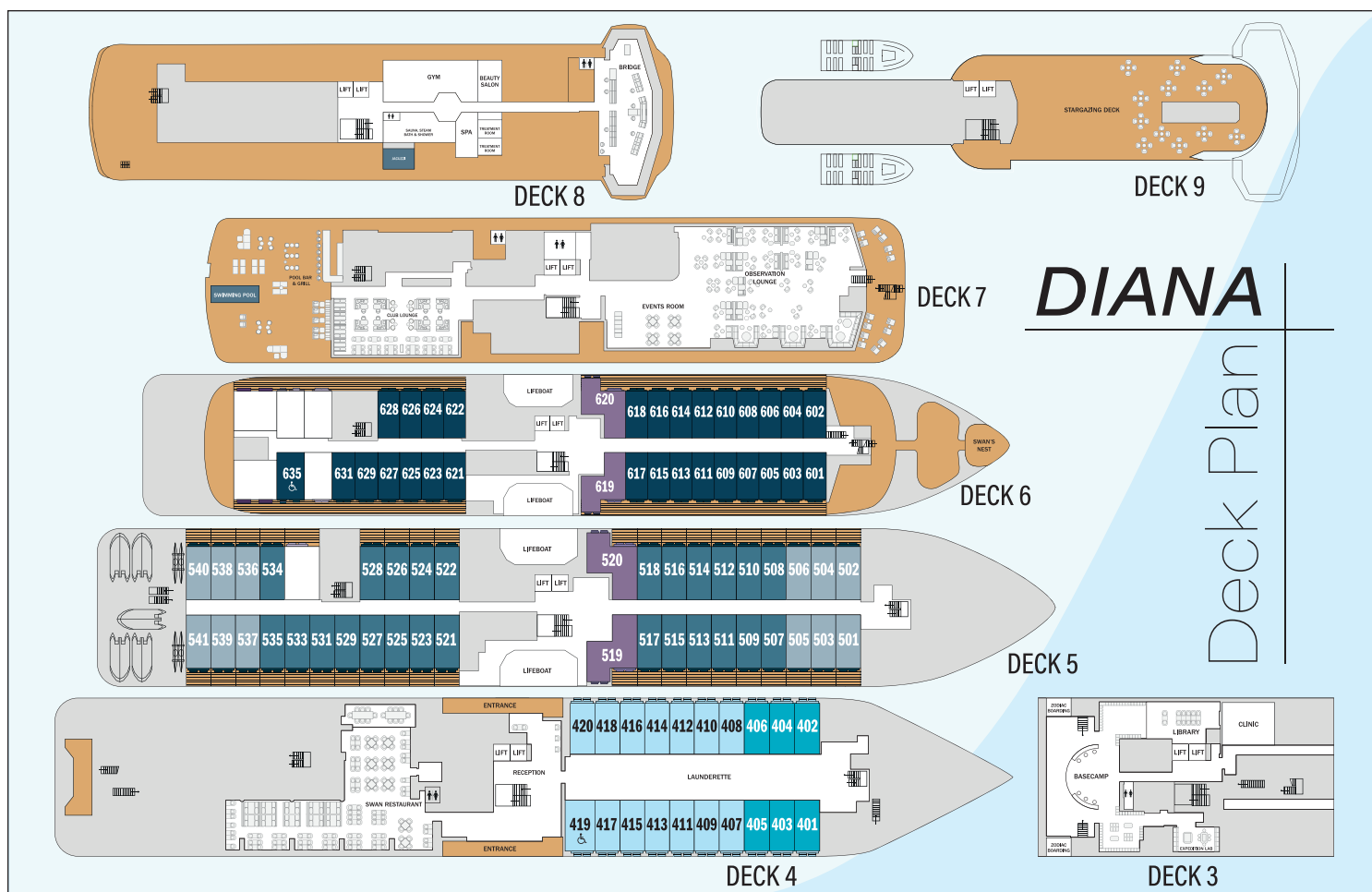
Bruges is a perfectly preserved medieval town known for its charming canals, magnificent architecture, and exquisite art. A walking tour through narrow cobblestone streets takes us to the marketplace, Belfry Tower, Town Hall and the Chapel of the Holy Blood. Explore City Hall's main room, a masterpiece of Gothic design with late 19th-century murals and a polychrome vault. Also visit the Church of Our Lady, which houses Michelangelo's sculpture of Madonna with Child. (B,L,D)

**Monday, May 25**  
**AMSTERDAM, The Netherlands**

Disembark and transfer to the airport for flights homeward.



**The famed vineyards in Médoc, France**



All accommodations aboard *Diana* are spacious staterooms and balcony suites. They are elegantly decorated, face outside, affording sea views, and include a queen-size bed that can be arranged as two twin beds, a spacious bathroom, mini-refrigerator, safe, ample closet space, climate control, telephone, TV, Wi-Fi, and USB connections, as well as other amenities.

CATEGORY	DESCRIPTION	RATES PER PERSON / DOUBLE OCCUPANCY
<b>E</b>	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 401–406.	\$ 10,990
<b>D</b>	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 407–420.	\$ 11,290
<b>C</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 501–506, 536–541.	\$ 12,390
<b>B</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 507–518, 521–529, 531–535.	\$ 12,790
<b>A</b>	Suites with balcony and living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 6. Suites 601–618, 621–635.	\$ 13,190
<b>AA</b>	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. 474 sq. ft. Decks 5 & 6. Suites 519, 520, 619 & 620.	\$ 16,990

**FOR SOLO TRAVELERS** | A limited number of cabins are available for single occupants in Category D at 120% of the per-person, double occupancy rate, and in Categories C, B, and A at 150% of the per-person, double occupancy rate.

## LOYALTY REWARD PROGRAM

Travel on this cruise program and enjoy savings of **\$400 to \$900** per person on your next voyage with **THE SKEPTICS SOCIETY and THALASSA JOURNEYS** aboard a Swan Hellenic ship. Savings are determined by the stateroom category booked and is applicable when you reserve your trip within 30 days of the completion date of **WESTERN EUROPE'S HISTORIC COASTAL CITIES**

This saving cannot be combined with other offers and is subject to change.



## PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

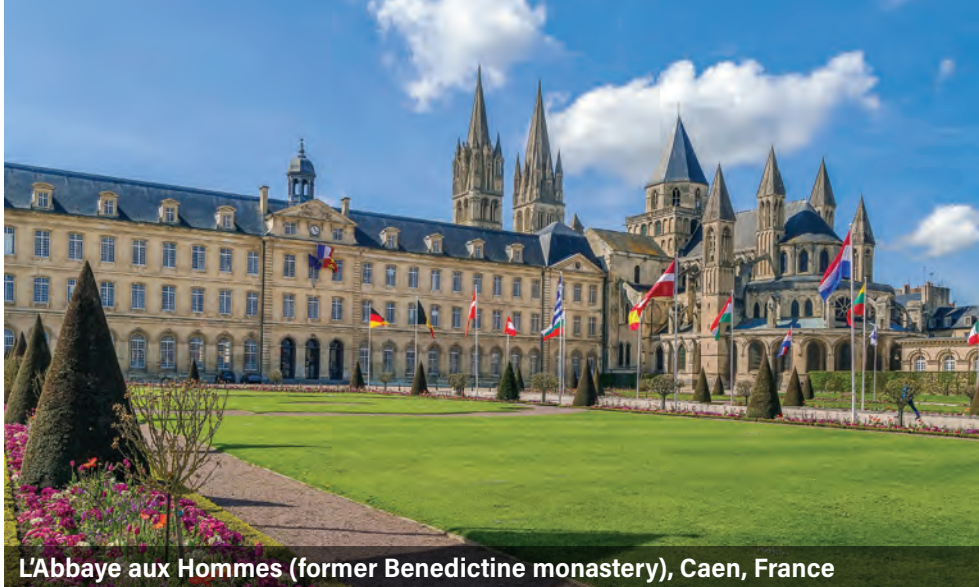
The rates are all-inclusive. There are no hidden costs and no additional charges such as shore excursions or embarkation and port charges. Other than the international airfare and expenses of a personal nature, all else is included. Specifically, the rates include:

- One night at the *Avenida Palace Hotel* (or similar) in Lisbon.
- Welcome dinner in Lisbon.
- Cruise aboard the Swan Hellenic *Diana*, as described in the itinerary.
- Airport/hotel/pier transfers and handling of luggage on arrival and departure dates.
- Lectures and discussions with Jared Diamond.
- Complete program of tours and excursions as mentioned in the itinerary with professional English-speaking guides.
- All meals aboard the ship, with a selection of wines, beer and soft drinks during lunch and dinner.
- Welcome and farewell cocktail receptions aboard the ship hosted by the captain.
- Open bar with select alcoholic beverages.
- Coffee, including espresso and cappuccino, tea and soft drinks throughout the day and night.
- 24-hour room service.
- Gratuities to the ship's crew, guides, porters and drivers.
- Basic Wi-Fi aboard the ship.
- The services of an experienced Thalassa Journeys Trip Director.
- All local taxes and service charges, including port and embarkation taxes.
- Complete pre-departure material.

**NOT INCLUDED:** International airfare; travel insurance; expenses of a personal nature; any items not mentioned in the itinerary or the above inclusions.



Belfry Tower, Bruges, Belgium



L'Abbaye aux Hommes (former Benedictine monastery), Caen, France



Gijón, Spain

## GENERAL INFORMATION

SKEP 26D-0513

**PAYMENT SCHEDULE:** A deposit of \$1,500 per person is required to reserve your space on the tour. Final payment is due 90 days prior to departure. Payment can be made by personal check or charged to a credit card.

**CANCELLATIONS & REFUNDS:** All cancellations are subject to a \$300 per person administrative fee. Cancellations received 71-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 70 days of departure are subject to 100% cancellation penalties. Requests for cancellations must be made in writing. No refunds will be made for any part of this program in which you choose not to participate.

**INSURANCE:** We strongly recommend the purchase of trip cancellation insurance, which is available for coverage of expenses in conjunction with cancellation due to illness or accident. Baggage insurance is also recommended. In the event that you must cancel your participation in a travel program, trip cancellation insurance may be the only source of reimbursement.

**ITINERARY:** The itinerary, accommodations and arrangements are subject to change at the discretion of Thalassa Journeys.

**RESPONSIBILITY:** Please read carefully the following terms and conditions, which constitute the sole, legally enforceable agreements between the traveler and Thalassa Journeys. Thalassa Journeys acts solely as agents for the traveler with respect to all transportation, hotel and other tour arrangements. In that capacity, we exercise all reasonable care possible to ensure the traveler's safety and satisfaction, but, we neither assume nor bear any responsibility or liability for any injury, death, damage, loss, accident, delay or irregularity arising in connection with the services of any ship, airplane, train, automobile, motor coach, carriage or other conveyance, or the actions of any third-party, involved in carrying the traveler or in affecting these tours. We are not responsible for damages, additional expenses, or any other losses due to cancellation, delay or other changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, civil disturbances, acts or threats of terrorism, travel warnings or bans, termination or suspension of war risks or other carrier insurance, quarantine, acts of God or other causes beyond our control. All such losses must be borne by the traveler, and tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. In the event of cancellation, delay or rescheduling mandated by any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall have the option of accepting in lieu of the original tour such rescheduled tour or other substituted tour(s) as may be offered by us, or else, receiving a refund of as much of such advance tour expenditures as we are able to recover on the traveler's behalf from carriers, third-party tour vendors, etc., but, we shall not have any obligation or liability to the traveler beyond the foregoing. We reserve the right to make alterations to the tour's itinerary and to substitute hotels, transportation methods, or lecturers if this is required. We reserve the right to cancel, delay, or reschedule any tour prior to departure, and, so long as this is not due to any of the aforesaid causes beyond our control, the traveler shall be entitled to a full refund of all monies paid to that point if he/she so desires. No refund shall be made for any unused portion of any tour. By forwarding their deposit(s), the traveler certifies that he/she and/or their dependents, minors or others covered thereby do not have any mental, physical or other condition of disability that could create a hazard for them or other travelers. We reserve the right to decline to accept or to decline to retain any person as a member of any tour should such person's health, condition or actions adversely affect or threaten the welfare or safety of other travelers or impede the tour. Baggage or valuables brought on the tour shall be transported, handled or stored at the traveler's risk entirely, and, we shall bear no liability or responsibility for any damage or other loss thereto. Resolution of any disputes arising hereunder shall be affected exclusively in the state or federal courts presiding in Florida, pursuant to applicable Florida law.

**RATES:** Tour costs are based upon current airfares, tariffs, and currency values. While we do everything possible to maintain the listed prices, they are subject to change.

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# SKEPTIC

## WESTERN EUROPE'S HISTORIC COASTAL CITIES

With **Jared Diamond**

May 13-25, 2026



The Cathedral of St. James dominates the skyline of Santiago de Compostela, Spain

**FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION**

**PLEASE CALL**

**THALASSA JOURNEYS AT**

**866-633-3611**

or email

**[reservations@thalassajourneys.com](mailto:reservations@thalassajourneys.com)**