

# **SKEPTIC**

The Skeptics Society

## **WESTERN EUROPEAN PASSAGE**

**A Voyage from Amsterdam to Lisbon**

**Aboard the New Expedition Cruise Ship *Diana***

**August 6 - 17, 2023**



Dear Friends

The Atlantic ports of Western Europe have long served to connect the continent with the wider world, serving as bases for local and global trade, discovery, and conquest, and producing great wealth in the process. On this voyage, we discover some of the finest artistic and cultural fruits of that wealth as we sail the length of the coast from the North Sea to Iberia.

Beginning in Amsterdam, we sail southward to discover a remarkable array of sites that serve as testaments to the legacy of European civilization, spanning centuries from the American Cemetery and Memorial overlooking the beaches of Normandy to the medieval castles and cathedrals of Portugal and Spain. Among the places we visit are three UNESCO World Heritage Sites—the storied abbey/fortress of Mont-St.-Michel; the great Christian pilgrimage site of Santiago de Compostela; and Coimbra University in Portugal, one of the oldest in Europe. To these justly famous monuments, we add extraordinary collections of art in Amsterdam and Bruges, the picturesque fishing towns of Honfleur and Concarneau, and Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao, almost certainly destined to become another UNESCO site.

Accompanying us throughout the voyage will be retired Ambassador Elisabeth Millard, who will share her experience and insights gained through 26 years in the Foreign Service. During excursions ashore, we will be accompanied by expert local guides and by members of our onboard team, who will also enrich our understanding through lectures and discussions aboard.

The vessel for this extraordinary journey will be the Swan Hellenic *Diana*, a state-of-the-art, new-generation expedition cruise ship, currently under construction in Finland and due to launch in early 2023. Accommodating only 192 guests in beautifully appointed staterooms and balcony suites, *Diana* will feature several lounges, a restaurant, outdoor cafe, spa, library and beauty salon, and will be equipped with the latest safety and environmentally-friendly technology.

We hope you will be able to join us for this truly once-in-a-lifetime voyage, as we explore the eastern shores of the Atlantic Ocean on this compelling Western European Passage.

Best wishes,



Dr. Michael Shermer  
Executive Director  
The Skeptics Society

PS: 7% of your cruise fee will be a tax-deductible donation to The Skeptics Society — a 501(c)(3) nonprofit organization.

Cover: Mont-St.-Michel, France

## GUEST LECTURER

### AMBASSADOR ELISABETH MILLARD



**Ambassador Elisabeth Millard** retired in 2019 after 26 years in the Foreign Service. She served as the senior career official in charge of European and Eurasian affairs from 2017 until 2019. Her prior assignments include tours as ambassador to Tajikistan, deputy chief of mission in Kazakhstan and Consul General in Casablanca, Morocco, as well as to India, Nepal, Denmark and the Czech Republic. In Washington, Ambassador Millard served two tours on the National Security Council, including as Special Assistant to the President and Senior Director, as well as on the staff of John Kerry as Deputy Executive Secretary. In retirement, she has served four years as Senior Advisor for European and Eurasian Affairs to the U.S. Mission to the United Nations during the General Assembly.

Ambassador Millard grew up in Europe and North Africa. She was educated at the University of Geneva, the London School of Economics and Johns Hopkins School of International Studies (SAIS). She speaks fluent French, Swedish and Danish and has studied Russian and German.



Mosaic from Portugal's ancient Roman site of Conimbriga

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THALASSA JOURNEYS TOLL-FREE 866-633-3611



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



*Oceanview Stateroom*



*SH Balcony Room*



*Observation Lounge*



*Sauna*



*Club lounge*



*Outdoor Café / Bar with swimming pool*

Currently under construction in Finland and launching in early March 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, a system of powerful batteries, and a unique water filtration system, *Diana* leaves a minimal footprint. For cruising

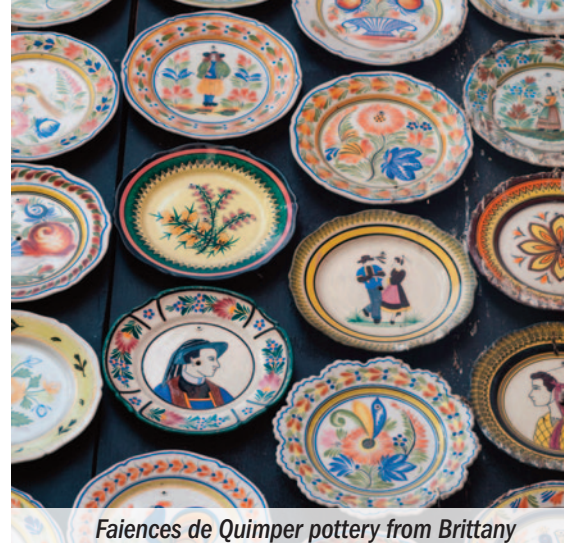
in Polar regions, the ship meets the stringent requirements of the new Polar Code with its high PC5 Category A ice-strengthened hull and other advanced features. A computer-controlled Dynamic Positioning System allows the ship to maintain position without anchoring. Operated by a complement of 135 experienced 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.

**FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THALASSA JOURNEYS TOLL-FREE 866-633-3611**





*Faïences de Quimper pottery from Brittany*



*Jerónimos Monastery, Lisbon*

## ITINERARY

**Sunday, August 6, 2023**  
**DEPART THE UNITED STATES**

**Monday, August 7**  
**AMSTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS**

Arrive in Amsterdam and transfer to the deluxe hotel *Hilton Amsterdam* (or similar). This evening, gather with fellow travelers for a welcome dinner. (D)

**Tuesday, August 8**  
**AMSTERDAM/EMBARKATION**  
Amsterdam is one of the great capitals of Europe, known for its picturesque canals and wealth of museums. After breakfast at the hotel, enjoy a tour of this marvelous city followed by a visit to the famed Rijksmuseum with its unrivaled collection of Dutch Masters. Late in the afternoon, transfer to the pier to embark *Diana* and set sail. (B, D)

**Wednesday, August 9**  
**ZEEBRUGGE/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)

**Thursday, August 10**  
**HONFLEUR, FRANCE**  
Honfleur sits on the banks of the estuary where the Seine River meets the English Channel. Its Old Harbor is extraordinarily picturesque and has been a favored subject of countless artists, including, perhaps most famously, Claude Monet. It is also our gateway to the beaches of Normandy and to Colleville-sur-Mer, home to the World War II Normandy American Cemetery and Memorial. The majority of the nearly 10,000 American soldiers killed at Omaha Beach are buried in this 170-acre cemetery on land given to the United States by France as a token of gratitude. (B,L,D)

**Friday, August 11**  
**SAINT-MALO/MONT-ST.-MICHEL**  
This morning we arrive at the medieval city of Saint-Malo, a town that is fiercely proud of its seafaring traditions and was the lifelong home of the explorer, Jacques Cartier. It is also our

gateway to the UNESCO World Heritage site of Mont-Saint-Michel. Rising abruptly from the flat Dol marshes is a great granite cone with a town, fortress and monastery clinging to its steep sides. Crowned by the 11th century abbey church, Mont-St.-Michel is one of the architectural marvels of Western Europe. After lunch aboard ship, enjoy an afternoon tour of Saint-Malo, followed by time at leisure to walk along the town's walls and explore the little shops that line the quaint streets. (B,L,D)

**Saturday, August 12**  
**CONCARNEAU**  
Concarneau on the southern coast of Brittany is best known for its Ville Close (Walled City), built on a small island just offshore. This medieval fortification remains the heart of Concarneau, with 15th and 16th-century half-timbered, gabled buildings lining the cobblestoned streets within the walls. Rue Vauban, the main street, leads to the fishing port—the leading tuna port in Europe—where more than 200 boats line the docks in front of the fish market. Afternoon at sea aboard *Diana*. (B,L,D)

**Sunday, August 13**  
**BILBAO, SPAIN**  
Bilbao, capital of the Spanish Basque country, is one of the most avant-garde cities in Europe.



This morning, visit Frank Gehry's Guggenheim Museum, opened in 1997. Gehry's expressionistic design and technical use of titanium, glass, and limestone make this structure one of the most important buildings of the late 20th century. After lunch aboard, we will visit the Museum of Fine Arts and leisurely explore the old quarter of Bilbao, called Casco Viejo. The Museum of Fine Arts contains a superlative collection of work, from the old masters, such as Goya and Zurbarán, to the modern work of artists, such as Bacon and Gauguin. It's considered to have one of the most important collections of art in Spain. (B,L,D)

**Monday, August 14**

#### **GIJÓN/OVIEDO**

From the port of Gijón, in Spain's province of Asturias, drive to nearby Oviedo, the capital of the province and one of the most attractive and historic cities in northern Spain. Enclosed by sections of the medieval walls and centered on the Cathedral, the Old Quarter of the city, first built in the 9th century, is a maze of ancient streets and squares lined with fine churches and other medieval buildings designed in the characteristic Asturian style of architecture. Close to the city, we will also visit the church of Santa Maria del Naranco, an architectural gem situated in a lovely wooded slope, built originally as a palace. (B,L,D)

**Tuesday, August 15**

#### **VIGO/SANTIAGO DE COMPOSTELA/FINISTERRE**

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. Our full day tour with lunch includes the Cathedral, the Townhall, and the Palace of Saint Jerome. Rejoin the ship in the port of Finisterre. (B,L,D)

**Wednesday, August 16**

#### **FIGUEIRA DA FOZ/COIMBRA/CONIMBRIGA, PORTUGAL**

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. Following lunch 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)

**Thursday, August 17**

#### **LISBON/ USA**

Morning arrival in Lisbon. After breakfast, disembark and transfer to the airport for flights homeward. (B)



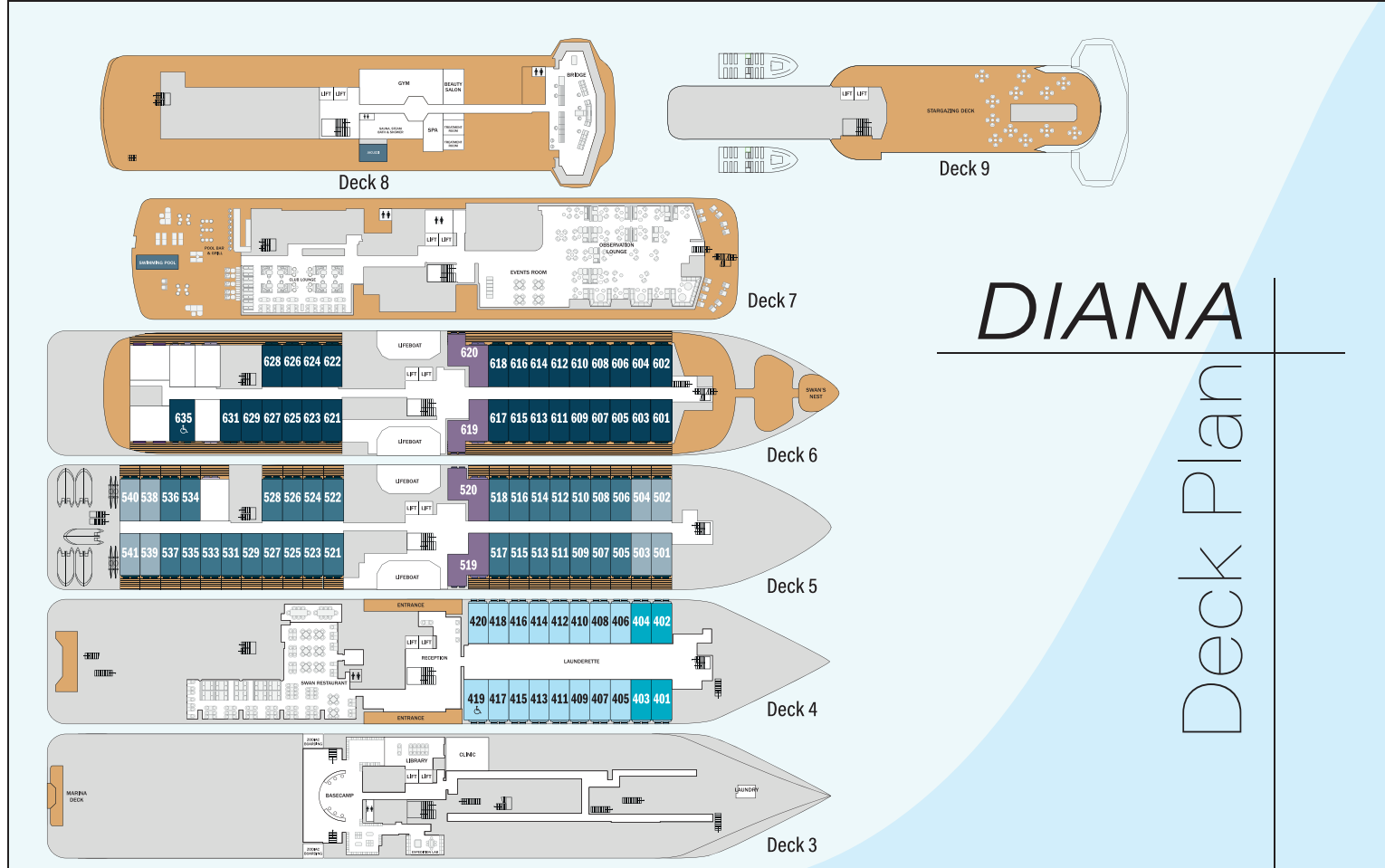
*Honfleur harbor, Normandy, France*



*The Guggenheim Museum, Bilbao*



*Catedral de Santiago de Compostela, Spain*



## RATES

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 – 404.	\$ 9,190
<b>D</b>	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 405 – 420.	\$ 9,590
<b>C</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 501 – 504, 538 – 541.	\$ 10,590
<b>B</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 505 – 518, 521 – 537.	\$ 10,990
<b>A</b>	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 6. Suites 601 – 618, 621 – 635.	\$ 11,490
<b>AA</b>	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. 474 sq. ft. Decks 5 & 6. Suites 519, 520, 619 & 620.	\$ 12,990

## SAVINGS FOR SOLO TRAVELERS

A limited number of cabins are available for single occupancy in categories D to B at no additional charge. Additional single cabins are available at a supplement of 50% of the per person double occupancy rate, instead of the normal 70% supplement.

FOR RESERVATIONS AND INFORMATION, PLEASE CALL THALASSA JOURNEYS TOLL-FREE 866-633-3611



## 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 deluxe hotel *Hilton Amsterdam* (or similar).
- Welcome dinner in Amsterdam.
- Cruise aboard the *Diana*, as described in the itinerary.
- Group airport/hotel/pier transfers at designated times, and handling of luggage.
- Lectures by Ambassador Elisabeth Millard.
- Additional lectures by members of onboard team of experts.
- All tours and excursions as described in the itinerary, including lunch on full day tours, led by 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.



Concarneau en Bretagne, France

## GENERAL INFORMATION

**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 61-90 days prior to departure will be assessed a penalty equal to 50% of the total program cost per person. Cancellations received within 60 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.

CST 2138603-50

ST 42048

**FOR RESERVATIONS  
AND INFORMATION,  
PLEASE CALL  
THALASSA JOURNEYS  
TOLL-FREE**

**866-633-3611**

**Or download a PDF at  
[skeptical.com/WestEuro2023](http://skeptical.com/WestEuro2023)**



**FOR RESERVATIONS  
AND INFORMATION,  
PLEASE CALL  
THALASSA JOURNEYS  
TOLL-FREE 866-633-3611  
Or download a PDF  
at [skeptical.com/WestEuro2023](https://skeptical.com/WestEuro2023)**

**The Skeptics Society invites you to Explore Western European Passage,  
a Voyage from Amsterdam to Lisbon, August 6 - 17, 2023  
Aboard the New Expedition Cruise Ship *Diana***

*Bruges, Belgium*

