

SKEPTIC
The Skeptics Society

With Guest Lecturer,
RICHARD DAWKINS

Passage from Ireland to Iceland: Including the Scottish and Faroe Isles



Goðafoss waterfall, Iceland

Aboard the New Expedition Cruise Ship *VEGA*
June 2 - 16, 2024

SKEPTIC

The Skeptics Society

Dear Friends,

I am delighted to be able to invite you to join **Richard Dawkins**, the foremost exponent of science and reason of his generation, on this voyage from Dublin to Reykjavík as we explore Europe's northernmost islands—Scotland's Hebrides, Orkneys, and Shetlands, Denmark's Faroes, and Iceland—a remote world known for its rugged landscapes, picturesque villages, fascinating history, and nature lovers' delights.

Our first ports of call are in the Hebrides—the holy Isle of Iona and the Isle of Skye, both rich in the history of Celtic peoples. A day in the Scottish Highlands is followed by stops in the Orkney and Shetland Islands, where the Neolithic sites of Skara Brae and Stennes compete for our attention with the seabirds—guillemots, kittiwakes, and white-tailed eagles—that abound there. Some 250 miles to the northwest are the Faroes, a self-governing archipelago within the Kingdom of Denmark, known for their Viking heritage, traditional way of life, and a plethora of puffins.

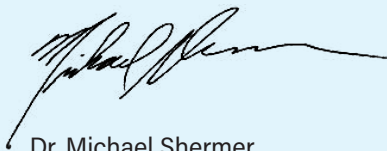
On the seventh day of our voyage, we reach Iceland, where we will spend five days exploring this immensely fascinating island forged by the twin crucibles of ice and fire, and home to some of the most extraordinary geology on the planet. We will sail into stunning fjords, encounter volcanic landscapes of lava fields and hot springs, magnificent waterfalls, and ice-capped mountains, and marvel at the thousands upon thousands of puffins, terns, and guillemots that nest here.

Richard Dawkins will accompany us throughout the voyage and will present lectures on evolutionary biology and on the wonder of science. He will also preview his upcoming book that posits fascinating insights into the species we see today.

Our vessel for this cruise will be the Swan Hellenic *Vega*, a state-of-the-art, new-generation expedition cruise ship built in Finland and launched in July 2022. Accommodating only 152 guests in superb staterooms and balcony suites, *Vega* features elegant common areas and technological, mechanical and environment-friendly features.

I hope you will join Richard and fellow members and friends of the Skeptics Society on this exploration of some of Europe's most intriguing and seldom-visited islands.

Warm regards,



Dr. Michael Shermer
Executive Director
The Skeptics Society

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



Corrieshalloch Gorge National Nature Reserve, Scotland



Atlantic puffins, Grímsey Island

GUEST LECTURER

RICHARD DAWKINS



Richard Dawkins is one of the world's most respected scientists, writers and thinkers. His books on science have significantly impacted his own field of evolutionary biology, and his critiques of religion, culminating in his best-selling book *The God Delusion*, have made him a leading advocate for secularism and evidence-based thinking. From 1995 to 2008 Richard Dawkins was the Charles Simonyi Professor of the Public Understanding of Science at Oxford University. He is an internationally best-selling author. Among his books are *The Ancestor's Tale*, *The Selfish Gene*, *The Blind Watchmaker*, *Climbing Mount Improbable*, *Unweaving the Rainbow*, *A Devil's Chaplain*, *The God Delusion*, *The Greatest Show on Earth*, *The Magic of Reality*, *An Appetite for Wonder*, *Outgrowing God*, and *Flights of Fancy*. Dawkins is a Fellow of the Royal Society and of the Royal Society of Literature. He is the recipient of numerous honours and awards, including the 1990 Michael Faraday Award of the Royal Society, the 1994 Nakayama Prize, the 1997 International Cosmos Prize for Achievement in Human Science, the Kistler Prize in 2001, the Shakespeare Prize in 2005, the 2006 Lewis Thomas Prize for Writing about Science, and he was named Author of the Year at the 2007 Galaxy British book Awards. His around-the-world speaking tour is the focus of a 2013 documentary *The Unbelievers* which also features appearances by Woody Allen, Stephen Colbert, Cameron Diaz, Ian McEwan, Ricky Gervais, Stephen Hawking, Eddie Izzard, Bill Pullman, and Sarah Silverman. Dawkins was named the top "World Thinker" by a 2013 Prospect Magazine poll of 10,000 readers from over 100 countries. He coined the term "meme" in his book *The Selfish Gene*, a term that has gained significant prominence in the online world. In 2006 he founded the Richard Dawkins Foundation for Reason & Science (www.richarddawkins.net) to promote a more scientifically literate and secular world. His American foundation merged with the Center for Inquiry in 2016 with the mission to foster a secular society based on reason, science, freedom of inquiry and humanist values.

THE NEW 152-GUEST EXPEDITION CRUISE SHIP VEGA



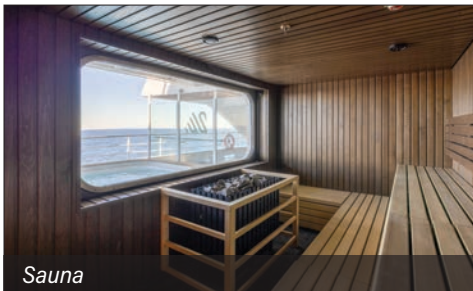
Oceanview Stateroom



Balcony Suite



Observation Lounge



Sauna



Club Lounge



Outdoor Café/Bar with swimming pool

Built in Finland and launched in July 2022, Swan Hellenic's *Vega* is a new-generation expedition cruise ship. Although at 10,250 tons the ship is large enough to accommodate more than 250 passengers, *Vega* will accommodate a maximum of 152 guests in 76 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, *Vega* is among the world's first environmentally responsible ships. Equipped with hybrid engines and a unique water filtration system, *Vega* 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 120 experienced European officers and international crew members, *Vega* will

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

Vega'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 76 staterooms, 60 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** AT **866-633-3611**

ITINERARY



Sunday, June 2, 2024

DEPART THE UNITED STATES.

Monday, June 3

DUBLIN, Ireland

Arrive in Dublin and transfer to *The Davenport Hotel* (or similar) for the night. Gather this evening for a welcome dinner with fellow travelers. (D)

Tuesday, June 4

DUBLIN/EMBARKATION

After breakfast at the hotel, visit the beautifully decorated State Apartments of Dublin Castle and its undercroft, where small boats once brought provisions via an underground river. Visit Trinity College to view the *Book of Kells*, temporarily displayed in The Print House,



a Neoclassical building erected in 1724. Following lunch, visit the National Gallery before transferring to the pier to embark *Vega*, and set sail for Northern Ireland. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, June 5

PORT ELLEN, Islay Island, Scotland

Today we call at Port Ellen, a tiny village on the Isle of Islay in Scotland. The port is home to the Carraig Fhada Lighthouse which showcases breathtaking views of the surrounding coastline. We will visit the serene Singing Sands beach, coated with white sand and popular for birdwatching as well as other wildlife sightings. In the afternoon visit the Museum of Islay Life which conveys the history and heritage of this special place. We will also get a chance to learn about the whiskey production for which Islay is famed. (B,L,D)

Thursday, June 6

DUNVEGAN, ISLE OF SKYE, Scotland

Today is devoted to exploring the stark beauty of the Isle of Skye. Begin with a scenic drive across the island to Portree, a charming fishing village that happens also to be the capital of the island. Enjoy time at leisure here to browse along the colorful waterfront of shops and cafés, before returning to Dunvegan, where lunch is aboard ship. The afternoon excursion is a tour of massive Dunvegan Castle, the historic seat of Clan MacLeod set amid a 42,000-acre estate and said to be the oldest continuously inhabited castle in Scotland. This evening, a 3-piece ensemble of fiddle, Irish harp, and bagpipes will come aboard to offer a concert of traditional Celtic music. (B,L,D)

Friday, June 7

ULLAPOOL

Today we explore the Scottish Highlands, pausing at the spectacular mile-long Corrieshalloch Gorge, before continuing to Inverewe Gardens on the shores of Loch Ewe. Designed by Osgood MacKenzie, the gardens were opened to the public soon after the end of WWII and became part of the National Trust in 1953. The warm currents of the North Atlantic Drift create a welcoming climate where exotic plants from around the world flourish at a latitude more northerly than Moscow. Himalayan rhododendrons, Tasmanian eucalyptus and many Chilean and South African plants are featured here, together with a large collection of flora from New Zealand. (B,L,D)

Saturday, June 8

STROMNESS, Orkney Islands

Stromness is our gateway to Neolithic Orkney, an extensive area on the island of Mainland designated as a UNESCO World Heritage Site because of its wealth of prehistoric ruins. Discover the Standing Stones of Stennes, the henge and stone circle of the Ring of Brodgar, and Skara Brae, the best-preserved Neolithic village in Northern Europe. Explore this fascinating site and the beautifully curated exhibits at the modern visitor center that illustrate what life was like here in the distant past. The cliffs of the island are home to thousands of seabirds, and bird watchers will want to keep a keen eye out for the guillemots, kittiwakes, and white-tailed eagles that abound here. (B,L,D)

Sunday, June 9

LERWICK, Shetland Islands

The 100 islands of the Shetland Archipelago were first inhabited during

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Dublin Castle, Ireland



Torshavn, Faroe Islands

the Stone Age and later ruled by Norsemen for hundreds of years, before being annexed by Scotland in 1472. *Vega* will dock at the lively harbor of Lerwick, capital of the island and Britain's northernmost town. We begin a drive through Tingwall Valley to the Keolka Croft, where you will learn about the lives of farmers who till the land within the peculiarly Scottish system of small-scale tenant farming called "crofting." On our return drive to Lerwick, we will watch for small native Shetland ponies, and once in the town, we will visit the Shetland Museum, and perhaps shop for some world-famous Shetland knitwear. (B,L,D)

Monday, June 10

TORSHAVN, Faroe Islands

We call today in the Faroe Islands in the middle of the North Atlantic, seldom visited because they are so remote. We disembark in Torshavn, the small port town that has been the capital of the islands since the 9th century, when the Vikings founded a settlement here. Our exploration includes the quaint old quarter of Tinganes, where small wooden houses are roofed with turf; 16th-century Fort Skansin; and the National Museum of the Faroe Islands. (B,L,D)

Tuesday, June 11

DJÚPIVOGUR, Iceland

Djúpivogur, in southeastern Iceland, is a small town on a peninsula near the mouth of Berufjörður fjord, with an awe-inspiring pyramid-shaped mountain as its backdrop. It serves as a gateway to Vatnajökull National Park, Europe's largest covering 14% of Iceland, including ice caps, waterfalls, glaciers, canyons, craters and volcanoes. (B,L,D)

Wednesday, June 12

GRÍMSEY ISLAND

Grímsey is the northernmost island of Iceland, jutting out of the ocean with the Arctic Circle running through its center. Grímseyjarhreppur, the only town, is home to some 100 people, most of them intrepid fishermen who work the rich banks that surround the island. Grímsey is one of the best places in Iceland for watching cliff nesting birds like Black-legged kittiwake, Northern fulmar, Atlantic puffin, razorbill, Black guillemot, and murre. The island also has one of Iceland's largest tern nesting sites and one of the largest puffin colonies in Iceland. (B,L,D)

Thursday, June 13

AKUREYRI/LAKE MÝVATN

Akureyri, the cultural and commercial center of northern Iceland and "the capital of the north," came to prominence in the 19th century when it began to export the produce of the surrounding agricultural region. From Akureyri, travel to Lake Mývatn, a volcanic area of incredible

geological features, including hot springs, boiling mud pots, and fumaroles. Also visit Goðafoss ("Waterfall of the Gods"), where in the year 1000 Christianity was declared the official religion of the island. Lunch will be at a restaurant in Akureyri. (B,L,D)

Friday, June 14

ÍSAFJÖRÐUR AND VIGUR

Arrive in the morning at the tiny fishing village of Ísafjörður, built at the foot of a high volcanic plateau in the center of Westfjords Peninsula. After a visit to the Westfjords Heritage Museum, board the ship's Zodiacs and motor to the small island of Vigur, known as the "Pearl of the Western Fjords." Vigur is a significant seabird sanctuary that includes colonies of Arctic terns, puffins, Black guillemots, and Eider ducks. We will also visit the only farm on the island, which has been in the same family for generations. (B,L,D)

Saturday, June 15

DYNJANDI WATERFALL/PATREKSFJÖRÐUR

Our second day on Iceland's Westfjords Peninsula begins at the impressive Dynjandi ("thunderous") Waterfall, one of Iceland's most photographed sites—a 300-foot main falls that cascades into six smaller falls below. In the afternoon, *Vega* calls in Patreksfjörður, home to Europe's largest bird cliff, the perfect place to spot the iconic puffin, since the species is protected here and has little to fear from humans. (B,L,D)

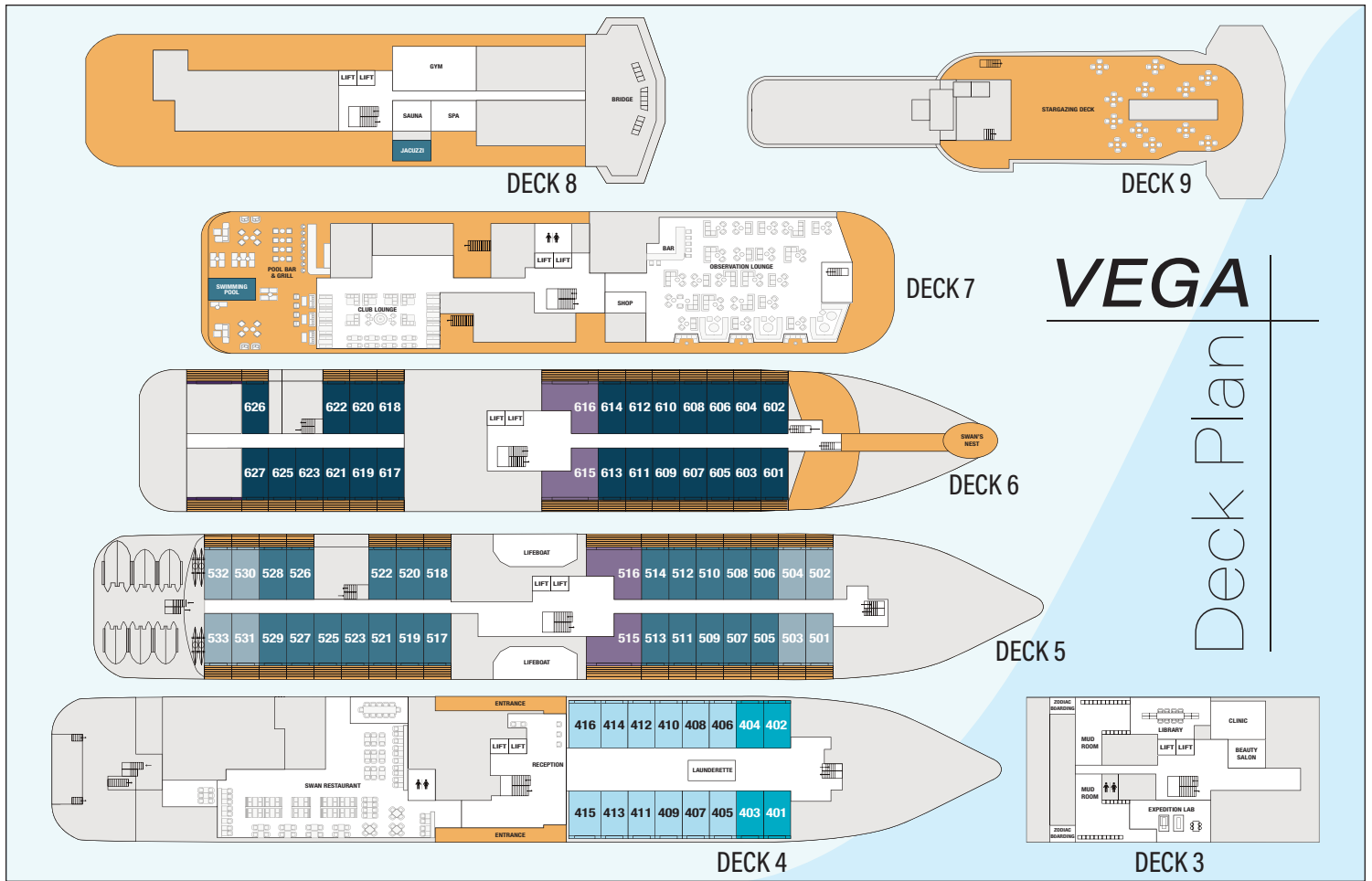
Sunday, June 16

REYKJAVÍK/DISEMBARKATION

After breakfast aboard, disembark *Vega* and transfer to the airport for flights homeward. (B)



Neolithic Skara Brae UNESCO World Heritage Site in the Orkney Islands.



VEGA

Deck Plan

All accommodations aboard Vega 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
E	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 401-404.	\$9,790
D	Oceanview staterooms with two large oval windows. 206 sq. ft. Deck 4. Staterooms 405-416.	\$10,190
C	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 501-504, 530-533.	\$11,190
B	Suites with balcony & living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 5. Suites 505-514, 517-523, 525-529.	\$11,690
A	Suites with balcony and living room area. 300 sq. ft. Deck 6. Suites 601-614, 617-623, 625-627.	\$12,690
AA	Suites with large balcony, separate bedroom & living room. 440 sq. ft. Decks 5 & 6. Suites 515, 516, 615 & 616.	\$14,590

LOYALTY REWARD PROGRAM

Travel on this cruise program and enjoy savings of **\$400 to \$900** per person on your next voyage with **SKEPTICS and THALASSA JOURNEYS** aboard a Swan Hellenic ship. Savings is determined by the stateroom category booked and is applicable when you reserve your trip within 30 days of the completion date of **PASSAGE FROM IRELAND TO ICELAND.**

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

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.

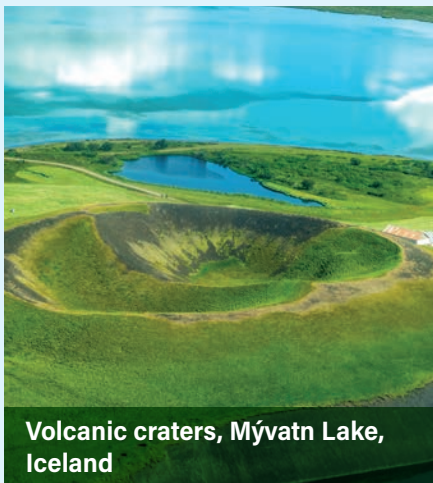
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PROGRAM INCLUSIONS

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 Davenport Hotel* (or similar) in Dublin.
- Welcome dinner in Dublin, and tour of Dublin and lunch on the day of embarkation.
- Cruise aboard the Swan Hellenic *Vega*, as described in the itinerary.
- Group airport/hotel/pier transfers overseas at designated times, and handling of luggage.
- Program of lectures and discussions with Richard Dawkins.
- Complete program of shore excursions, led by professional local 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.



Volcanic craters, Mývatn Lake, Iceland



Ísafjörður, Iceland

GENERAL INFORMATION

SKEP 24V-0602

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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