

P R E S S R E L E A S E

Orion's Melanesian Discovery expedition

In March 2010 *Orion* explores the islands of Melanesia (Auckland to Rabaul) with a 16 night expedition described by the influential US magazine as a South Pacific 'must-do'.

The voyage commences with exploration of New Zealand's famed Bay of Islands before heading to the beautiful Isle of Pines in New Caledonia. Experience the true meaning of Melanesia's "Ring of Fire" with an unforgettable visit to Tanna (home of the *Jon Frum* Cargo Cult) and the adrenalin-rush vista over the rim of Mt Yasur - an active volcano famed for its pyrotechnics. Wonderful still photos and video opportunities abound in a desolate world of black ash and guttural rumblings.

The voyage continues along the *Ring of Fire* with *Orion's* signature Zodiac arrivals on crystalline island beaches. In Espiritu Santo, scuba divers will be able to experience an unforgettable dive on the world's largest accessible shipwreck, the 22,000 ton President Coolidge, inadvertently sunk after hitting a US minefield during World War II.

More spectacular than any film set, Ngella Island features the unforgettable hulking remains of the doomed expedition ship *World Discoverer*, beached in 2001 after hitting a coral reef. In the Solomon Islands *Orion* will also visit the beautiful island of Ghizo and nearby Kennedy Island, named after one JFK's WWII heroic exploits as commander of the PT109.

Culturally fascinating, *Orion's* guests will enjoy a warm welcome at every destination, with plenty of music, uninhibited rhythmic dancing and singing and an invitation to join the locals in their beautiful villages. Intricate wooden and stone carvings, shell necklaces and woven baskets are all hard to resist - and buying locally means bargains abound.

The voyage concludes in Rabaul, Papua New Guinea, with a fittingly dramatic entrance to Simpson Harbour dominated by the massive Mt Tavurvur, a volcano still erupting today, long after it helped turn old Rabaul into a modern day Pompeii in 1994.

.....

Following the voyage departure from Rabaul back to Australia has been is simplified as *Orion* has arranged for an Australian-operated charter flight non-stop between Rabaul and Cairns to assist in convenient transfers.

.....

Melanesian Discovery voyage

Departs Auckland 1st March, 2010. 16 nights Auckland, Bay of Islands, Isle of Pines, Tanna, Port Vila, Malakula, Espiritu Santo, Santa Ana, Ngella, Ghizo and Kennedy Island, Rabaul. Charter flight from Rabaul to Cairns available.

Fares begin from \$11,890 per person for an ocean view Category B Stateroom through to Owners' Suites with French Balcony at \$24,905 per person

.....

Ranked #2 expedition cruise ship in the world in the current Berlitz Cruise Guide, Orion is the world's latest purpose-built luxury expedition cruise ship, featuring an unmatched range of onboard facilities.

With 75 crew and a maximum of just 106 passengers Orion offers the highest staff to guest ratio and guest to public space ratio of any ship based in Australian waters.

Further information on all Orion Expedition Cruises to Antarctica, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia, Asia, New Zealand, the Kimberley and Arnhem Land can be obtained by visiting the website www.orionexpeditions.com

For reservations or to obtain a brochure call Orion Expedition Cruises: 61-2 9033 8777 (Sydney callers) 1300 361 012 (regional and interstate) or your travel agent. Email: info@orionexpeditions.com