

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

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Expeditions with an edge. Orion's Voyages of Discovery

Fancy eyeballing a 70 kilo, 3 metre, Komodo dragon? How about crawling through the infamous Cu Chi tunnels in Vietnam, or commuting by elephant to witness sunrise from atop a temple at Angkor Wat? Perhaps you are the sort of person who would enjoy visiting a beguiling 200 year old Vietnamese village, where home-made beer is still sold, roadside, from the keg, or stroll beaches secreted away from resorts where local vendors carry buckets of lobsters and crabs for sale.

If so, then an Orion Expedition Cruises 'Voyage of Discovery' may be for you.

These expeditions represent far more than mere holidays, they are experiences of a lifetime providing enduring memories. One becomes involved in the people and the destinations – intellectually and physically more satisfying than merely being a deckchair spectator.

Recently re-confirmed as the second best expedition cruise ship in the world*, Orion provides the 5 star benchmark in Australia for expeditionary voyages to fascinating destinations that include Antarctica, Papua New Guinea, Melanesia, the Kimberley and Arnhem Land, New Zealand's Sub-Antarctic islands and, new for 2009, South East Asia.

Knowledgeable expedition team and specialist guest lecturers enhance the experiences with comprehensive briefings and onboard workshops designed to provide insight and understanding into the culture, history, flora and fauna, geography and bio-diversity of each area visited.

Voyages to destinations not previously visited by Orion are designated 'Voyages of Discovery' which, for the explorer in us, means venturing to places often far from well worn tourist tracks; remote backwaters full of genuine experiences, untouched by tourism and far from the madding crowd.

But how are these adventures developed? The team at Orion, headed by Expedition Program Manager Justin Friend, continuously seek untouched destinations to satisfy the urge of new and repeat passengers' desire to explore a further path less travelled - journeys which require a flexible attitude by passengers and crew alike, adding a certain frisson unique to *Voyages of Discovery*.

Justin, who was married to a PNG highlander (securing her hand in marriage by the traditional method of establishing the number of pigs required as suitable exchange), searches the South Pacific and Asia for new and exciting destinations for Orion to visit. Working closely and co-operatively with local communities

Justin often travels for weeks at a time in remote locations searching for that special place or event that defines an Orion expedition.

Orion's *Voyages of Discovery* ply waterways criss-crossing historic routes first discovered by early navigators notably Cook, Torres and Magellan, later developed as trade routes and occasionally, such as in the Coral Sea, the location of an historic sea battle.

There are regions of ground-breaking zoogeographical revelations like Wallacea in Indonesia and dramatic examples of nature's volcanic might along the Ring of Fire - exciting South Seas and Asian destinations captured in the literature of the likes of James A Michener and Somerset Maugham.

To obtain insight into Orion's range of 2009 itineraries, or read about Justin's adventures as he filters out the passé (and plain unsuitable) to capture the magic that is the hallmark of every Orion voyage, read Justin's travel notes now by visiting http://www.orionexpeditions.com/pathways/justins_blog

*2008 Edition of the Berlitz Complete Guide to Cruising & Cruise Ships

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Forthcoming Orion Voyages of Discovery:

2009 will see Orion Voyages of Discovery to the Spice Islands, Vietnam, Cambodia and Thailand in S.E. Asia as well as additional remote islands in Papua New Guinea.

29 March 2009 / New Guinea Island Adventure. 11 nights.

This expedition includes a visit to Kitava in the Trobriand Islands (focus of Bronislaw Malinowski's anthropological fieldwork leading to the group being known as the 'Islands of Love'), before venturing to Lambom - where Orion will be the very first cruise ship to visit - and Lamassa where Orion will be just the second such ship to visit. Concludes in Rabaul, PNG.

September and October 2009 / Three further 9 and 11 nights Voyages of Discovery in 2009 - The Spice Islands Adventure, Gulf of Siam Explorer (touching the route taken by Marco Polo on his return to Venice from China in the 1290's) and Vietnam Explorer.

These exclusive Asian *Orion Voyages of Discovery* cultural expeditions balance traditional and modern Asia, with plenty of time to mingle with the locals and take in the sounds, colours and fragrances of these fascinating destinations.

Ranked #2 expedition cruise ship in the world in the current Berlitz Cruise Guide, Orion is the world's latest and Australia's only purpose-built luxury expedition cruise ship.

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 Orion Expedition Cruises 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@orioncruises.com.au

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