

# TRAVEL



## The Tropical ISSUE

Sun, sea, sand and silly drinks: the ultimate guide to escaping the chill this winter

**KEEPING YOUR COOL:  
A SURVIVAL GUIDE**  
What to pack, what to read and how to avoid towels shaped like swans | p27

**WIN A LUXURY STAY  
IN THE MALDIVES**  
A £9,000 holiday to two five-star resorts is up for grabs | p27





Unless stated, prices are per person and include flights and all meals on board



**Paradise ahoy!**

From left, the Paul Gauguin, which plies the South Pacific; taking a dip on P&O's Ventura in the Caribbean; and Silver Shadow, which is off to the Rio carnival. Below, going with the flow on the Mekong

# CRUISE

Sun at sea

**Y**ou can't beat a cruise for winter-sun value for money. Whether it's an all-action floating mega-resort or a more restrained smaller ship, you're guaranteed sunshine, fabulous food and ever-changing views. There's a cruise for all tastes and most pockets – and remember, prices crash in the weeks before departure, so to save a few bob, hold your nerve and keep an eye on websites such as [cruise.co.uk](http://cruise.co.uk) and [iglcruise.com](http://iglcruise.com).

## THE CARIBBEAN

Sometimes all you need as winter draws in is an old-fashioned sail around the Caribbean. This is it: a 15-day voyage from Barbados, departing on January 16 and heading up the Antilles to the Turks and Caicos and back, aboard P&O's Ventura. Designed to shatter the idea that cruising is for fuddy-duddies, Ventura is a big, modern ship with a signature Marco Pierre White restaurant, a huge theatre with West End-quality shows and a circus-skills school. In a nod to tradition, formal nights still mean black tie. From £1,469; 020 8544 6612, [iglcruise.com](http://iglcruise.com)

## NEW YORK TO ST KITTS

It's a seaborne city, a funfair and a foodie paradise: launching next month, Royal Caribbean's 4,180-passenger Quantum of the Seas has a skydiving simulator, dodgems, floor-to-ceiling LED

screens in interior cabins, streaming sea views, and 18 restaurants, including one by Jamie Oliver. The North Star capsule will hoist you out over the ocean for panoramic views, and Mamma Mia! is performed every night. Depart on December 1 for an 11-night cruise from New York, calling at Puerto Rico, St Maarten, Martinique, Barbados and St Kitts. From £1,829; 01246 819819, [bolsovercruiseclub.com](http://bolsovercruiseclub.com)

## SEYCHELLES

See 10 islands and countless beaches on a new one-week voyage, sailing weekly, on the twin-hulled Pegasus, part of the new breed of island-hopping mini cruise ships sailing the archipelago. It has just 23 cabins and follows a leisurely itinerary that includes beach barbecues, snorkelling and dinners under the stars. You'll visit Mahé, Curieuse, St Anne, Cousin, Praslin, St Pierre, La Digue, Félicité and more.

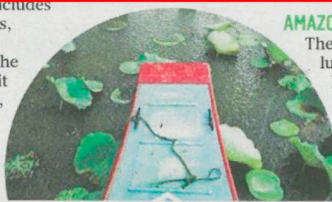
From £2,309; 020 8324 3117, [seafarercruises.com](http://seafarercruises.com)

## VIETNAM TO CAMBODIA

The Aqua Mekong is in the vanguard of luxury cruisers in Southeast Asia. Designed not as a boat with a hotel, but as a five-star hotel with an engine, it has 20 suites, a restaurant by the award-winning chef David Thompson and a cocktail bar. You cruise for a week along the Mekong River, from My Tho, south of Ho Chi Minh City (Saigon), to Siem Reap in search of stilt villages, flooded forests and Buddhist temples. The cruise departs weekly until the end of November, after which three- and four-day trips are available. From £4,435; 020 7666 1234, [westernoriental.com](http://westernoriental.com)

## AMAZON

There's only one luxury ship on the Ecuadorian reaches of the Amazon, and that's the new Anakonda, a boutique cruiser with



just 18 air-conditioned cabins. There are four naturalists and four guides on board, so you're in expert hands as you navigate the backwaters of Ecuadorian Amazonia, searching for pink river dolphins, black caimans and anacondas, visiting remote communities and soaking up the biodiversity of this extraordinary region. The four-night cruise, departing weekly, can be bolted on to three nights' B&B at the colonial-era Patio Andaluz, in Quito. From £2,929; 020 8758 4774, [sunvil.co.uk](http://sunvil.co.uk)

## BUENOS AIRES TO BARBADOS

Next year, Silversea's luxurious Silver Shadow will cast decorum to the wind with a two-night stopover in Rio de Janeiro, to join the carnival celebrations. As a million revellers crowd the streets, passengers will take their seats for an A-list view of the parades. If you want to join in, no one's stopping you. The 17-day cruise departs on February 10 from Buenos Aires, calling at Santos, Rio, Buzios, Salvador, Natal, Fortaleza, Devil's Island and Barbados. From £6,650; 0844 251 0837, [silversea.com](http://silversea.com)

## PANAMA CANAL

The last chance to transit the Panama Canal in its centenary year comes on December 4, when Celebrity Infinity departs from Fort Lauderdale for a 16-night sailing via Cartagena and the canal to Manta, in Ecuador, Lima, in Peru, and Arica, in Chile, before docking in Valparaiso. A mid-size ship, Infinity offers a classic style of cruising, although it has been upgraded, with a state-of-the-art spa and an internet lounge. From £2,098; 0845 456 0523, [celebritycruises.co.uk](http://celebritycruises.co.uk)

## SOUTH PACIFIC

"Most people live on a lonely island, Lost in the middle of a foggy sea. Most people long for another island, One where they know they will like to be," sang Bloody Mary in the musical South Pacific. Was she referring to Britain, and does that alternative really exist? Let us know when you return from your 10-night cruise aboard the Paul Gauguin. It sails from Tahiti on February 4, calling at Bora Bora, Rangiroa, the Tuamotus and Society Islands, and Moorea. From £4,961; 020 7399 7691, [pgcruises.com](http://pgcruises.com)

