

Japanese subtropical Islands

From **24/03/2023**
to **31/03/2023**

Ship: **LE SOLEAL**

From **Keelung (Chilung)**
to **Osaka**



PONANT is the first cruise company to take you to the heart of the sublime landscapes of **the tropical islands in southern Japan** during an **expedition cruise**. On this **all-new 8-day itinerary** aboard *Le Soléal*, from **Taiwan to Okinawa**, you will discover the rich natural heritage, traditional villages and craft of the **Okinawa archipelago** and the **Ryukyu Islands**.

As you depart from the Port of **Keelung**, in **Taipei**, the capital of the lush island of Taiwan, you will set sail for the southern islands of Japan, including **Ishigaki**, the capital island of the Yaeyama Islands. In the heart of the magnificent **Iriomote-Ishigaki National Park**, you will be able to enjoy the dynamic atmosphere of the eponymous city or discover Kabira Bay, renowned for its idyllic scenery, combining crystal-clear turquoise water and beaches of white sand.

Following a new port of call in the picturesque village of **Taketomi**, with its traditional Okinawan dwellings and its idyllic sandy expanses, *Le Soléal* will sail south to **the island of Iriomote**. A UNESCO World Heritage Site, this little corner of paradise will enchant you with its authentic and preserved character, with its wild beaches lying alongside traditional villages surrounded by luxurious tropical forest: jungle, mangrove, rivers, waterfalls. This unique biodiversity is made up of many endemic species.

You will then head for **Kumej**, the island that linked Okinawa to China in the past. Famous for its 'Eisa', a form of folk dance performed to the rhythm of traditional drums, this multifaceted island will reveal itself through its natural treasures: the mythical Mifuga rock formation or the idyllic beach of Hatenohama, a point of reference for fans of the underwater world.

Your next port of call will be **Zamami**, in the Kerama Islands. You will enjoy the unspoiled beauty of this pristine island, known the world over for the distinctive blue of the surrounding sea, called 'Kerama blue'. The sea life in the area is also exceptionally rich and sea turtles can often be spotted swimming among the coral.

Le Soléal will sail to the coral island of **Kikai**. You will be fascinated by this enchanting island with beautiful beaches and turquoise waters. Its lush seabed and biodiversity will allow you to enjoy a captivating exploration.

You will disembark in **Osaka**, a modern, forward-looking city, in the heart of the Japanese archipelago.



The information in this document is valid as of 06/07/2022

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YOUR STOPOVERS :

KEELUNG (CHILUNG)

Embarkation 24/03/2023 from 16:00 to 17:00

Departure 24/03/2023 at 18:00

On the north-east tip of **Taiwan**, the harbour city of **Keelung** stands on one of the most beautiful coasts on the island. Nearby is the spectacular natural park of **Yehliu**, famed for its striking rock formations. It's easy to tour the city's historical sites on trails that cross the lush green hills surrounding the harbour from Chung Cheng Park to Fort Ershawan, you can enjoy superb views of Keelung and the coastline. But the main attraction is the **Miaokou night market**, where you can taste some typically Taiwanese culinary delights.

ISHIGAKI

Arrival 25/03/2023

Departure 25/03/2023

Located to the south of the main island of the **Yaeyama archipelago**, **Ishigaki** boasts all the aspects of an authentic **piece of paradise**. You've guessed it, you don't come here for its skyscrapers but for its pure emerald waters and idyllic beaches. The waters off Shiraho, on the island's south-west coast, have one of the largest areas of blue coral in the world.

TAKETOMIJIMA

Arrival 26/03/2023

Departure 26/03/2023

Off the coast of the Okinawa Prefecture, Taketomi Island (Taketomijima) is fascinating for its traditional character, preserved in a beautiful, lush setting. Like its big sisters, Ishigaki and Kuroshima, this island in the Yaeyama archipelago is the ideal destination for an immersion in typical landscapes and the insular way of life of the former Ryukyu Kingdom. Here, time seems to have stood still. There are very few cars about; bicycles and carriages drawn by imposing oxen remain the only means of transport. This is an ideal opportunity to wander through the picturesque streets lined with traditional dwellings with red-tiled roofs and lion-shaped *shisa* statues placed in front of the vast majority of houses to keep evil spirits at bay.

IRIOMOTEJIMA

Arrival 26/03/2023

Departure 26/03/2023

Nestled in the very heart of the Yaeyama archipelago, **Iriomote Island** conjures visions of a hidden paradise. With 90% of the island covered by **thick jungle**, crossed by **rivers and impressive mangrove forests**, Iriomote is an ideal destination

for fans of large preserved spaces. With exceptional fauna and flora, this lush jewel is home to many endemic species: you may be lucky enough to get to glimpse an **Iriomote cat** or a **crested serpent eagle**. During this port of call, you will also have the possibility of admiring the captivating underwater world during a free diving session or contemplating this lush jungle close up on a cruise along the calm waters of the island's rivers.

KUMEJIMA

Arrival 27/03/2023

Departure 27/03/2023

Located 90 km (56 miles) to the south-west of **Okinawa Honto**, **Kumejima** is a multifaceted island home to natural treasures. **Hatenohama**, a stunning 7 km-long (4.3 miles) fine-sand beach, promises wonderful carefree moments discovering the exceptional underwater worlds off the coast of Kumejima. **Mifuga**, a rock formation on the north coast of the island with a hole right through its middle, is a great example of the erosion along the coast. The eastern peninsula offers another geological feature, visible at low tide: 1,000 flat rocks each around one metre (3.2 feet) in diameter, formed by the contraction of lava from a nearby eruption a million years ago. They create a rocky plateau resembling a traditional Japanese tatami, hence the name **Tatami-ishi**.

ZAMAMI

Arrival 28/03/2023

Departure 28/03/2023

Zamami is an island in the **Kerama** archipelago, 40 km (25 miles) west of **Okinawa Island** in the China Sea. Visitors to this 16 km² (6 mi²) quasi-uninhabited isle are enchanted by the many untouched natural treasures they find here. You will discover a tranquil island with lush vegetation, lined with stunning white-sand bays bathing in the glimmering 'Kerama blue' waters around the archipelago. Zamami is also renowned for the beauty of its coral reefs, where multicoloured fish engage in an endless mesmerising ballet. The observation deck on Mount Takatsuki reveals stunning views of the Kerama Islands, granted national park status in 2014. With subtle shifting shades of azure above and all around, this island truly is paradise.

KIKAIJIMA

Arrival 29/03/2023

Departure 29/03/2023

Located between continental Japan and the main island of Okinawa, **Kikaijima** is a small preserved coral island where nature unfurls in all its splendour. Amidst this abundance of plants, you will be enchanted by century-old trees, majestic banyan trees and sugar cane plantations, which produce a delicious brown sugar. This island, inhabited since the 10th century and located on the trade route between China and Japan, has a turbulent history. During your exploration, perhaps you will notice some ancient coral stone walls, like an echo of the ever-present ocean. Between the white sandy beaches and the limestone coastlines, you'll also be able to enjoy a snorkelling trip and delightful possibilities for swimming.

AT SEA

Arrival 30/03/2023

Departure 30/03/2023

During your day at sea, make the most of the many services and activities on board. Treat yourself to a moment of relaxation in the spa or stay in shape in the fitness centre. Depending on the season, let yourself be tempted by the swimming pool or a spot of sunbathing. This day without a port of call will also be an opportunity to enjoy the conferences or shows proposed on board, to do some shopping in the boutique or to meet the PONANT photographers in their dedicated space. As for lovers of the open sea, they will be able to visit the ship's upper deck to admire the spectacle of the waves and perhaps be lucky enough to observe marine species. A truly enchanted interlude, combining comfort, rest and entertainment.

OSAKA

Arrival 31/03/2023 early morning

Disembarkation 31/03/2023 at 08:00

Like its big sister Tokyo, Osaka is the product of ancestral traditions and amazing **technological innovations**. And despite its size, its location on the Pacific Ocean give it a sense of **serenity**. The main historic landmark is the 16th century **Osaka Castle**, which stands proud in the midst of majestic skyscrapers. The lively streets of Dotomburi and the bizarre Shinsekai district attract thousands of locals and visitors. A multitude of restaurants offer menus full of regional specialities: *takoyaki*, made with octopus, and other succulent dishes such as *kushikatsu* kebabs.