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# T Travel

TRAVEL SECTION OF THE YEAR



**Konnichiwa!**  
 David Baddiel unleashes his inner Ninja in Japan 10



**Scott Dunn**  
 ANYTHING ELSE IS JUST A HOLIDAY

*Been there, Dunn that.*





# LITTLE GOES A

# LONG WAY

Micro-cruises take you to secret ports on small ships. *Sue Bryant* selects the best

**C**aptain Theo gives me a jaunty wave from the bridge as I swim laps around his ship. The Aegean is an inky blue. We're anchored off the island of Ios for what has become a much-loved daily ritual. Down goes the anchor, then all 24 of us, aged from 14 to 84, jump off the back of the ship for a cooling dip.

Such is the joy of micro-cruising – sailing on a small vessel that offers perks such as comfortable cabins, great food and organised excursions, but skips the waterslides, spas and West End shows. Micro-cruises also take you to parts that the mega-liners cannot reach.

Harmony G, the flagship of the Greek-owned Variety Cruises, keeps it simple: sundeck, bar, swimming platform and cabins for 42. There's a restaurant, too, but on my week-long odyssey to the Peloponnese and the Cyclades, it was only half-board. This works perfectly in Greece: in Kea, I ate cheese pies still warm from the bakery; down a vine-shaded alley in Syros, I pigged out on souvlakia, swordfish and lashings of Greek rosé.

Small ships don't have to follow rigid schedules, which is just as well, because it was too windy for the planned run to

Mykonos. Captain Theo plotted a less bumpy course and we pitched up at the gorgeous old town of Navplion, where the main square was packed with locals cheering on a Greek dance festival.

Although the week included star attractions such as Crete and Santorini, it was the less touristy places that I loved. On the sleepy Ionian island of Kithira, we tucked into fresh sea bream in a beachfront taverna while the full moon hovered over the hilltop castle.

For all the culinary discoveries ashore, the food on board, whipped up in a miniature galley by the chef, Stelios, was spectacular: colourful Greek salads, barbecued meats, stews and fresh seafood. One day, the crew served ouzo and grilled octopus on deck, while on another, a succulent grouper, big enough to feed 24, was wheeled out for lunch. After feasts like this, I'd flop on deck in a blissful, retsina-induced haze, watching the sun dance on the water. My kind of entertainment.

*Sue Bryant was a guest of Variety Cruises. A week's cruise from Athens, sailing on May 4, starts at £2,119pp, half-board, excluding flights (020 8324 3117, seafarercruises.com)*

## SEVEN MORE TRIPS ON TINY SHIPS

**SCOTLAND** The Majestic Line has converted two wooden fishing boats into smart little cruisers carrying just 11 people. They potter round the west coast of Scotland and the Hebrides, where you can watch seals and tuck into fine Scottish cuisine. A three-night cruise from Oban to Loch Linnhe, Glencoe and Tobermory, sailing on April 14, starts at £1,012pp, full-board (01369 707951, themajesticline.co.uk).

**CROATIA** Sail Croatia's small ships take up to 40 and pick their way along the coast, stopping for swims and leaving you to your own devices for dinner ashore most nights. A week's round trip from Split, sailing on April 29 and visiting Brac, Hvar, Mljet, Dubrovnik, Korcula and Makarska, starts at £649pp, including all lunches, two dinners and excursions, but not flights (0800 193 8289, sail-croatia.com).

**NORWAY** Learn to sail a barquentine and hone your photography skills as you explore of icy Spitsbergen, accompanied by naturalists and a professional photographer. There'll be chances to spot polar bears, whales and walruses, shimmy up the mast and lie in the bowsprit net. Eight nights on the 32-passenger Antigua start at £2,472pp, full-board, departing from Longyearbyen on September 22, 2018; flights are not included (01872 580022, classic-sailing.co.uk).

**TURKEY** Cruises don't come more laid-back than a week on a traditional wooden gulet, jumping off for a swim before breakfast, eating al fresco and lounging on deck as you sail from one exquisite bay to the next. The cabins are pretty basic, but you can always sleep under the stars. A week's cruise from Gocek to Marmaris on the 16-passenger gulet Nemesis, sailing on May 12, starts at £1,645 for two people, including five dinners, all other meals and drinks, but not flights (07583 001766, scicsailing.eu).

**MALDIVES** ScubaSpa operates two sleek 40-passenger motoryachts in the Maldives for people who love diving or spas – or both. In a week, you can opt for 17 dives,

**DOWN TO SIZE** Above, no need to share on a Maldives cruise with ScubaSpa. Below, Safari Endeavour in the Sea of Cortez

“A succulent grouper, big enough to feed 24, was wheeled out for lunch

eight spa treatments or a mix of the two. Beach barbecues, yoga, paddleboarding and snorkelling are also on offer. The May 12 departure starts at £2,465pp, full-board, including flights (020 7978 0505, originaldiving.com).

**MEXICO** Adventures come thick and fast in the Sea of Cortez, where, from UnCruise Adventures' 84-passenger Safari Endeavour, you can swim with sea lions, hike past giant cacti and spot whales. The nine-night trip, departing on February 2, starts at £3,695pp, full-board, including flights, two nights in LA and activities (020 7399 7630, mundyadventures.co.uk).

**GALAPAGOS** A tiny ship is an unobtrusive way of getting close to the archipelago's sea lions, iguanas and blue-footed boobies. Noble Caledonia's Isabela II takes just 40 and comes with snorkelling gear, Zodiac boats and the expertise of three naturalists. A 12-day tour of Quito and Ecuador's cloud forest, with a four-night cruise, starts at £6,995pp, full-board, including flights (020 7752 0000, noble-caledonia.co.uk).

