



DISCOVER THE SECRETS OF MELANESIA

EXPLORING PAPUA NEW GUINEA,
SOLOMON ISLANDS AND VANUATU

EXPEDITION DOSSIER
23 OCT – 8 NOV 2027



HERITAGE
EXPEDITIONS



BETCHART
EXPEDITIONS INC.

with **MAAS**, Sigma Xi, & ACS
17050 Montebello Rd., Cupertino, CA 95014





Sail into a world few ever experience as we explore the rich history, cultures and wildlife of Papua New Guinea, the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu on this 17-day authentic expedition cruise. Visit idyllic islands and isolated villages where unique time-honoured traditions and elaborately costumed dancers welcome us into their world. From the culturally rich arterial of the Sepik River we sail across the Bismarck Sea exploring remote shores and villages still living traditional lifestyles, and delve into the history, culture and wildlife of New Ireland and New Britain.

Crossing the Buka Channel at Nissan Island we see reminders of intensive World War II action, then enter a long-isolated world as we are among the first travellers to return to Bougainville in more than two decades. Sailing through the turquoise waters of the Solomon Islands, new vistas and unexpected encounters await. Discover one of the conservation jewels of the South Pacific on Tetepare Island, while

villagers on culturally-rich Malaita Island still make and use traditional Malaitan shell-money as a dowry and wear it as a status symbol. Experience a kaleidoscope of cultures as we explore Vanuatu, where more than 100 indigenous languages are spoken. With over 80 habitable islands, islanders have closely guarded their own cultures and languages. Our expedition embraces some of these cultures and languages, as we explore one of the happiest places on the planet.

Throughout Melanesia there are spectacular reefs, which are home to masses of fish and coral gardens of every colour. These waters offer some of the greatest marine diversity and snorkelling in the world and everybody will have the opportunity to appreciate the beauty beneath the waves. Whether you are snorkelling or swimming, this ocean aquarium is waiting to be explored and discovered.

For birders, this itinerary offers once-in-a-lifetime species on remote islands where few have been before, and endemic birdlife such as the Solomon Sea Eagle, or the Santa Cruz White-eye, may be seen. The birding potential is exceptional, and birders can maximise the opportunities with dedicated guides (1 per 10 guests) on customised excursions during our optional birding programme.

This expedition includes the option to join a sea kayaking excursion with an expert guide. Kayakers are rewarded with tranquil, tropical settings and are a source of fascination to the locals who often paddle their canoes out to join them, and invite them back to their villages.



ITINERARY

Day 1: Cairns, Australia

Arrive in the urban tropical paradise of Cairns, gateway to natural wonders the Great Barrier Reef and Wet Tropics World Heritage Rainforest, and make your way to the hotel where our group will spend the first night of the expedition. This evening meet your fellow voyagers and expedition guides over dinner at the hotel.

Day 2: Cairns to Madang, PNG

Enjoy breakfast at the hotel before our flight to Madang, the picturesque peninsula surrounded by islands and waterways. It is a thriving community renowned for its traditional artists, and the richness of its surrounding forests. Enjoy a Madang and Environs tour upon arrival which includes a visit to the Coastwatchers' Memorial Light at Kalibobo, Madang museum and Bilbil Village before returning to Madang to explore the markets. Boarding your ship you will have time to settle into your cabin and familiarise yourself with the ship; we will also take the opportunity to introduce you

to your Expedition Team and our voyage plans. You are invited to join the expedition team in the Observation Lounge and up on the Observation Deck as we set sail for the Sepik River.

Day 3: Sepik River

Sure to be one of the highlights of our expedition, we have allowed plenty of time to fully appreciate this remarkable river, its birds, animals and the people that call it home. The Sepik River, the longest in Papua New Guinea, flows from the highlands to the Bismarck Sea. It is a rich arterial river that has fostered great traditional artists. We plan to explore the river by Zodiac,

following tributaries and channels in search of local wildlife. Enjoy a warm welcome at Kopar Village where we will experience village life and a traditional Dragon Dance unique to this region. There is also an opportunity to purchase unique carvings directly from the artists.

Day 4: Manus Island

Seldom visited and little known, Manus Island is considered a jewel in the crown of Papua New Guinea. Biologically isolated the Manus Province is home to a high proportion of endemic species and our stop here is likely to be a birding highlight. Once the location of a detention centre, part of Australia's 'Pacific Solution', life on Manus Island continues according to traditional customs. Comprised of 10 villages and a population of less than 1,000, our visit to Derimbat Village includes taking part in an elaborate welcoming ceremony before exploring their village and unique way of life with a local guide.

Day 5: New Hanover

Today we plan to explore the remote beauty of the islands and villages of New Hanover, nestled within the New Ireland archipelago. This secret South Pacific paradise combines coconut tree studded



spectacular white sand beaches surrounded by stunning turquoise water and wildlife filled jungles to explore. During our time here we can enjoy the warm hospitality and authentic slices of village life with the locals who enjoy subsistent, traditional lifestyles. Zodiac cruise waterways deep into island interiors and explore dense rainforests and jungles searching for birdlife including Melanesian Kingfisher, Red-knobbed Imperial Pigeon, Knob-billed Fruit Dove and Mottled Munia. A highlight is exploring the vibrant underwater world of colourful corals and marine life snorkelling alongside Pipefish, Nudibranchs and Anemone Fish. Make sure you are out on deck to experience our thrilling passage as we sail through the narrow passage separating New Hanover from New Ireland as our adventure continues.

Day 6: Rabaul and Kokopo, New Britain

Six beautiful cone-shaped volcanoes ring Rabaul's dramatic, flooded-caldera harbour. Visit the bubbling hot springs and take in the magnificent views of the harbour and volcanoes from Observatory Ridge. As we explore the island, we will see fascinating reminders of the Japanese



© Heritage Expeditions

occupation, our tour taking in the site of the enormous volcanic eruption that all but destroyed Rabaul town, the underground bunker that was the hiding place of Pearl Harbour commander, Yamamoto, and joining the locals shopping at the bustling Kokopo markets.

Day 7: Nissan Island

A tropical atoll adrift in the azure waters of the Buka Channel, Nissan Island is bathed in rich tropical currents that abound in marine life. Seldom have outsiders had the opportunity to discover this world promising abundant pelagic fish-life and pristine coral reefs. Ashore there are still reminders of the brief, but intensive, World War II activities during which the islands were

recaptured by Kiwi, Australian and British forces from the Japanese occupiers. During our time ashore we will meet with the friendly locals from all three of the island's Balil Villages and search the dense woods for some of the elusive birds that occur here. Later the snorkellers will find plenty to discover in the coral reefs that surround Nissan.

Day 8: Bougainville Island

Today we discover the treasures of Bougainville, long isolated and in a strange way protected due to the conflict which swirled around its shores. High on many travellers' wish lists, this autonomous region within Papua New Guinea magnificently marries rugged, jungled terrain with amazing coral reefs offshore and is home to some of the greatest biodiversity in the region both above and below the water. Lying to the east of the country's mainland and north of the Solomon Islands, it comprises two main islands and several outlying islands and atolls making it both remote and hard to reach, but perfect for exploration by expedition ship. Discover Bougainville's strong ties and connections with the Solomon Islands, which is reflected in their music, culture and language.



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© Ewen Bell

Day 9: New Georgia Islands, Solomon Islands

The volcanic New Georgia Islands are found in the Western Province of the Solomon Islands and are characterised by extensive reefs and lagoons, rugged terrain and an abundance of rivers. Nature enthusiasts will relish landing on Kolombangara Island, where we plan to visit the Imbu Rano Lodge and Conservation Area which protects the island's central peak and search for the rare Roviana Rail along with other endemic bird species. Browse markets and perhaps purchase some of the wood or stone carvings the Western Province is famous for.

Day 10: Tetepare Island

Uninhabited for 150 years, this rugged island cloaked in rainforest and fringed with coral reefs is home to one of the Solomon Islands' leading community-driven conservation projects Tetepare Descendants' Association. Receiving international recognition for its conservation and archaeological

significance, three species of turtle, including the endangered leatherback, nest on its beaches while other species inhabiting the island and surrounding waters include dugong, the world's largest skink, endemic Tetepare White-eye and many more. A highlight of our voyage, this afternoon we plan to explore and enjoy a drift snorkel of the fringing reef with its outstanding marine biodiversity.

Day 11: Malaita

Mountainous Malaita is home to one-third of the Solomon's total

population and features pristine rivers and unexploited tropical forests. In the afternoon we hope to be invited by the world-renowned Kwaio People, led by Chief Esau, to discover their traditional way of life which the community have fiercely guarded alongside their ancestral lands. This invitation represents a rare privilege, and made possible by our ongoing connection with the community and assistance with their development of innovative community conservation programs. This is a once in a lifetime opportunity to spend time in the company of some of the most authentic, yet innovative, communities in the region.

Day 12: Santa Ana, Makira

Experience a traditional Solomon Island's welcome on arrival at Port Mary on Santa Ana Island. Also known as Owaraha or Owa Raha, this stunning coral island, first sighted by Europeans in 1568, is ours to explore today. Delight in the local hospitality and culture as we peruse local handicrafts, explore the lush forests with our guides and meet the local children at the village school or bask in tropical waters. Birders will be on the look out for the tiny Sooty Myzomela, Island Imperial Pigeon, Solomons Rufous Fantail and Chestnut-bellied Monarch among others.



© Stephen Bradley



Day 13: Nendö, Temotu Province

Nendö is the largest of the Santa Cruz Islands, which lie to the south-east of the Solomon Islands. The Spanish navigator Álvaro de Mendaña de Neira unsuccessfully attempted to establish a colony in 1595. Biologically these islands share more in common with Vanuatu. It is also the home of red feather money, sourced from the Scarlet Honeyeater. Watch the manufacture of red feather money, and join the locals in dances which reverberate through the ages.

Day 14: Torres Islands, Vanuatu

Today we sail to the rarely-visited pacific paradise and culturally rich Torres Islands, Vanuatu's northernmost islands. A collection of four main islets fringed with white sand beaches, clear azure waters, volcanic rock and cliffs topped with lush tangled jungles, our destination is Loh Island. After a warrior escort and welcome from the Chief we will experience the thrilling and rarely witnessed cultural wonder of the lēh-temēt – vibrant ritual headdresses known as temēt (primordial spirits) used during special singing and dancing ceremonial rituals. The colourful headdresses are regarded by the villagers as having the highest of supernatural powers and are destroyed immediately at the end of the dance ceremony. We will then have time to enjoy tours of the village, surrounding island or snorkel Loh's incredible underwater world.

Day 15: Espiritu Santo

Today we explore Vanuatu's largest Island, Santo; location of James Michener's *Tales of the South Pacific*. Indulge in a swim in the crystalline waters of Champagne Beach with its famed powdery white sand. This afternoon we will enjoy Zodiac cruises to the iconic blue holes of Santo. For those with an interest in the history of the island, there is a visit to Lugainville and Million Dollar Point.

Day 16: Ambrym

Today we will visit Ambrym, renowned as the island of volcanoes and magic throughout Vanuatu. We plan to head ashore at a secret location on the northern coast where the traditional Rom dance is still practised and custom carving is alive and well. A walk through the forest brings us to the 'arena' where masked dancers emerge from the forest. The forests of Ambrym offer some excellent walks to go in search of the local birds and plants, accompanied by our naturalists. This afternoon enjoy a final snorkel excursion.

Day 17: Port Vila, Vanuatu

Arrive into Port Vila and disembark after breakfast. Upon disembarking a transfer to our central city hotel or the airport will conclude your voyage. To allow time for disembarkation procedures we do not recommend booking flights from Port Vila before midday.

Note: During our voyage, circumstances may make it necessary or desirable to deviate from the proposed itinerary. This can include poor weather and opportunities for making unplanned excursions. Your Expedition Leader will keep you fully informed. This tour offers a variety of activities and excursions. Your personal interests will determine which of these you wish to join. Please note that some activities and excursions will run at similar times and it will not be possible to participate in both. Accordingly, refunds for excursions and missed landings are not available.

ABOUT OUR DISCOVERY FUND

Each area we visit has rich cultural experiences and wild treasures to offer. As guests, we have made a point to source and support local projects in the areas through which we travel. A contribution from each passenger represents a portion of the money we donate to ensure the longevity and success of educational, environmental and cultural initiatives in these regions.





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© Fiona Wardle



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HERITAGE ADVENTURER

Heritage Adventurer is a true pioneering expedition vessel of exceptional pedigree often referred to as the 'Grande Dame of Expedition Cruising'.

Purpose built for adventure in 1991 at Finland's Rauma shipyard and specifically designed for Polar exploration, *Heritage Adventurer* (formerly known as *MS Hanseatic*) is 124-metres long, boasts the highest passenger-ship ice-class rating (1A Super) and an impressive history of Polar and remote region exploration making her perfect for Heritage Expeditions signature experiential expedition travel.

Originally designed to accommodate 184 guests, we now welcome just 140 expeditioners to create a spacious, comfortable on board experience and continuation of the exceptional, personalised expedition experience synonymous with the company. While a fleet of 14 Zodiacs ensures

all guests are able to maximise their expedition experience. On board, enjoy stylish, sophisticated accommodations spanning 4 decks, visit the captain and crew in the Bridge with our Open Bridge Policy and dine on gourmet fare from leading Australasian chefs.

Watch your adventure unfold from numerous spectacular indoor and outdoor viewing locations including *Heritage Adventurer's* famed Observation Lounge resplendent with 270-degree views and join our world-renowned team of naturalists, botanists, historians and experts as they interpret the natural and human history discovered during each voyage, as well as hosting regular lectures.

And should you require a little R&R, unwind in the library, pool, gym, hot tub, sauna and steam room, indulge in some retail therapy or find a quiet place to enjoy a coffee or cocktail from the café and bar.

DATES

Voyage #HA271023
23 October – 8 November 2027

PRICES USD\$

Heritage Suite **\$26,300 pp***
Located on Deck 6, Heritage Suites are an expansive 44m² and feature large double panoramic windows, king bed, large living area with a sofa, coffee table and chairs and grand marble bathroom with a double basin, bathtub and shower, large writing desk, floor to ceiling cabinetry for storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Worsley Suite **\$22,600 pp***
Located on Deck 6, Worsley Suites are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable chaise-style lounge suite, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Single **\$22,600 pp***
Superior Single Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Triple **\$14,650 pp***
Superior Triple Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 5 **\$17,350 pp***
Superior Cabins on Deck 5 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Superior Deck 4 **\$16,300 pp***
Superior Cabins on Deck 4 are a spacious 22m² and feature large panoramic windows, king or two single beds, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Single **\$19,750 pp***
Main Deck Single Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, king bed, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

Main Deck Triple **\$14,300 pp***
Main Deck Triple Cabins on Deck 3 are a spacious 22m² and feature two porthole windows, two single beds and one Pullman bed which folds down from the wall, comfortable lounge, writing desk, private en-suite with shower, ample storage and a flat screen entertainment system.

* The price listed includes the discovery fund of USD\$1,000 (All prices are per person in USD\$).

ADDITIONAL OPTIONS

Birding Programme **\$500 pp***
Kayaking Option **\$1,455 pp***

PRICE INCLUDES

Discovery fund. One night hotel accommodation in a twin share room (incl. dinner/breakfast), transfer to airport and pre cruise flight from Cairns to Madang, all on board ship accommodation with meals, house beer, wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner and all shore excursions and activities. Programme of lectures by noted naturalists. Post cruise airport transfer.

PRICE EXCLUDES

Kayaking, birding and all items of a personal nature, laundry, drinks, gratuities. International/domestic flights unless specified above, visas, and travel insurance.

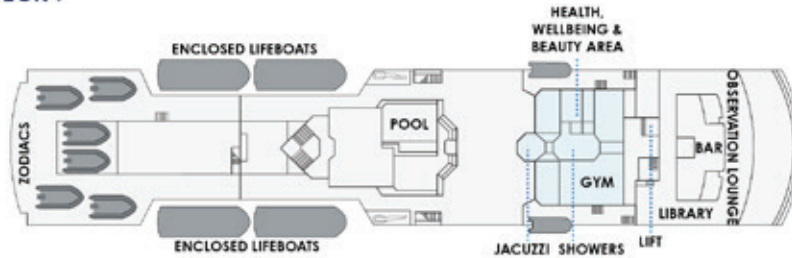
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Heritage Adventurer Deck Plan

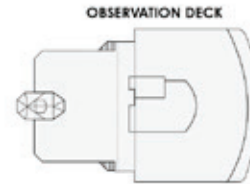


DECK 6: ● WORSLEY SUITE ● HERITAGE SUITE
DECK 5: ● SUPERIOR ● SUPERIOR TRIPLE ● SUPERIOR SINGLE
DECK 4: ● SUPERIOR
DECK 3: ● MAIN DECK TRIPLE ● MAIN DECK SINGLE

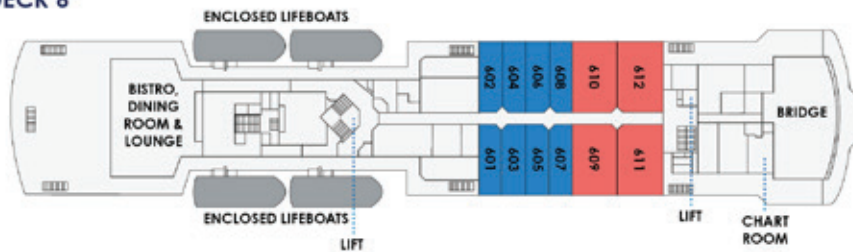
DECK 7



DECK 8



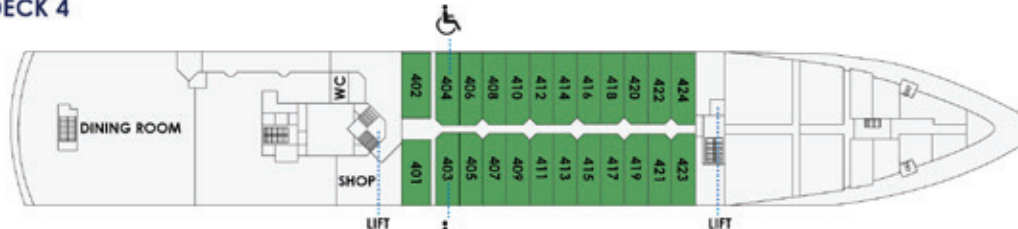
DECK 6



DECK 5



DECK 4



DECK 3



DECK 2



SUITE CATEGORIES

- HERITAGE SUITE
- SUPERIOR SINGLE
- DECK 4 SUPERIOR
- MAIN DECK SINGLE
- WORSLEY SUITE
- DECK 5 SUPERIOR
- SUPERIOR TRIPLE
- MAIN DECK TRIPLE

BETCHART EXPEDITIONS INC.
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17050 Montebello Rd., Cupertino, CA 95014



Call Betchart Expeditions with your questions and for reservations!
Phone (800) 252-4910 or (408) 252-4910 or Email: info@BetchartExpeditions.com
Betchart Expeditions Inc. CST#2036304-40 - 17050 Montebello Road - Cupertino, CA 95014
www.betchartexpeditions.com

COSTS & CONDITIONS: Discover the Secrets of Melanesia, October 23 - November 8, 2027

Voyage Fee:

Category:	Published	10% Discounted Fare Book by February 26, 2026	Deposit due by Feb 26, 2026
Heritage Suite, Deck 6	\$26,300.00	\$23,770.00 per person based on 2 per cabin	\$7,000
Worsley Suite, Deck 6	\$22,600.00	\$18,280.00 per person based on 2 per cabin	\$6,000
Superior Single, Deck 5	\$22,600.00	\$20,440.00 per person based on 1 per cabin	\$6,000
Superior Triple, Deck 5	\$14,650.00	\$13,285.00 per person based on 3 per cabin	\$4,000
Superior, Deck 5	\$17,350.00	\$15,715.00 per person based on 2 per cabin	\$5,000
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Main Deck Single, Deck 3	\$19,750.00	\$17,875.00 per person based on 1 per cabin	\$5,000
Main Deck Triple, Deck 3	\$14,300.00	\$12,970.00 per person based on 3 per cabin	\$4,500

Optional Programs: Birding \$500 per person; Kayaking Option \$1,455

Voyage Fee Includes: One-night hotel accommodations in a twin share room (incl. dinner/breakfast); transfer to airport and pre-cruise flight from Cairns to Madang; on board ship accommodation with meals; house beer, wine and soft drinks with lunch and dinner, landing fees and all expedition shore excursions. Program of lectures by noted naturalists. Post cruise airport transfer.

Voyage Fee Does Not Include: Kayaking, birding optional programs. International/domestic flights; independent transfers; pre/post extensions; any ground services before and/or after the voyage other than those specifically mentioned; passport, visas, required travel insurance and all items of a personal nature; drinks, phone calls, laundry, gratuities, administration fees and cancellation/luggage/repatriation/medical insurance (required to travel).

Questions, Reservations, Deposits, and Payments: To reserve your place on the Discover the Secrets of Melanesia, Oct 23 - Nov 8, 2027, please phone Terri at Betchart Expeditions Inc **(408) 252-4910** or **(800) 252-4910** or email: betchartTerri@gmail.com

To confirm your place: Advance payment as listed above is payable by check to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Receipt of advance payment and reservation form **AND** Booking Form, indicate your acceptance of Terms & Conditions. The final payment is due to Betchart Expeditions Inc by, June 20, 2027

Cancellations & Refunds: The initial deposit is refundable until April 15, 2027 less a handling fee of \$950 per person. Cancellation after April 15, 2027 deposit is fully forfeited. There is no refund for any cancellation after June 20, 2027 and any unpaid balance is due immediately. No refunds are made for unused services.

Responsibility: Betchart Expeditions Inc. acts only as agent for the passenger with respect to transportation and hotels and exercises every care possible. Betchart can assume no liability for injury, damage, delay, loss, accident, or irregularity in connection with the services of any airplane, ship, motorcoach, or any other conveyance used in carrying out the arrangements of the tour. We cannot accept any responsibility for losses or additional expenses due to delay or changes in air or other services, sickness, weather, strike, war, terrorism, quarantine, acts of God, or other causes beyond our control. All such losses or expenses will have to be borne by the passenger, as tour rates provide for arrangements only for the time stated. We reserve the right to substitute another leader of similar expertise or to cancel any tour prior to departure in which case the entire payment will be refunded with no further obligation on our part. The right is also reserved to decline to accept or retain any person as a member of the tour. No refund will be made for the unused portion of any tour unless arrangements are made in sufficient time to avoid penalties. Prices quoted in this brochure are per person, in USD. The price of the program is based on current tariffs and rates, and is subject to change. Any tariff, exchange rate, or fuel increases will be passed on to participants. Baggage is carried at the owner's risk entirely. It is understood that the air ticket when issued shall constitute the sole contract between the passenger and the airline concerned. The airlines concerned are not to be held responsible for any act, omission, or event during the time passengers are not on board their plane or conveyance. Discounts on voyage only, not including \$1,000 discovery fund.

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CST#2036304-40

Please mail the reservation form, Booking Form and your deposit check for (see below) per person to:

Betchart Expeditions Inc., 17050 Montebello Road, Cupertino, CA 95014.

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RESERVATIONS

#1825

YES! I/We want to join the **Discover the Secrets of Melanesia, October 23 - November 8, 2027** offered by Betchart Expeditions Inc. Please reserve _____ space(s). As a deposit, I/we have enclosed a check for \$_____ (see above) per person, payable to Betchart Expeditions Inc. Trust Account.

Name _____ Age _____

Name _____ Age _____

Street Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone _____

Email _____

Membership (please circle): AAAS Sigma Xi ACS Planetary Society Other _____

Category (in order of preference 1st – 2nd – 3rd choice)

_____ Heritage Suite, Deck 6	_____ Superior, Deck 5
_____ Worsley Suite, Deck 6	_____ Superior, Deck 4
_____ Superior Single, Deck 5	_____ Main Deck Single, Deck 3
_____ Superior Triple, Deck 5	_____ Main Deck Triple, Deck 3

Cabin Occupancy: _____ Twin _____ Single _____ Triple

_____ Share (____ with a friend, or ____ pair with a room-mate or room-mates)

Please mail Reservation Form & Deposit Check to: **Islands of Melanesia 2027**
Betchart Expeditions Inc.
17050 Montebello Road
Cupertino, CA 95014