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ABSOLUTELY

## WEDDINGS

SPECIAL

Inspiration and ideas  
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STYLISH / INTELLIGENT / ELEGANT

# TRAVEL



## ALL AT SEA

### SEA CLOUD CRUISES

Sea Cloud II carries just 94 guests and combines the facilities of a modern cruise with the old-world romance of a tall ship. She's beautifully finished, with open teak decks, where meals are often taken under the Greek sunshine.

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# SAIL AWAY

Sailing around the Cyclades on a tall-masted ship delivers island jewels, and the *pleasure of being carried on the wind*

By SANDY CADIZ-SMITH

**T**he Cyclades islands are scattered across the Aegean like a handful of sun-kissed pebbles. Their name comes from the soft circular sweep they make around sacred Delos, ancient spiritual heart of the region.

More than 220 islands and islets make up this constellation – many of them uninhabited – and they bask in 300 days of sunshine every year. The islands are known for the Meltemi, seasonal winds that make sailing exhilarating, sometimes unpredictable. We are about to discover this for ourselves aboard our stately tall-masted sailing ship, Sea Cloud II.

Our Cyclades journey begins in Athens, where boarding is smooth and unhurried. We're shown straight to our splendid Junior Suite with generous lounge, walk-in wardrobe and gleaming marble bathroom complete with bathtub and shower. There's a chilled bottle of champagne to welcome us – a sure sign of indulgent days ahead.

Sea Cloud II really is a sight to reckon with. She carries just 94 guests and combines the facilities of a modern cruise with the old-world romance of a tall ship. She's beautifully finished, with open teak decks, where meals are often taken under the Greek sun. It's a delightfully intimate setting with ocean views guaranteed.

Life aboard begins properly the next morning with our first sight of the theatre of sail. It's all done manually and we watch while some of the crew scale the mast and others gather, ropes in hand. With practised skill and precision teamwork, the crew raise the canvas until the whole ship seems to breathe out. It's captivating – an awe-inspiring start to a voyage.

We quickly learn that safety is everything, and the wind is the one true master. Captain Christian keeps us informed, his calm voice describing the onward journey, and there's always a thrilling edge of uncertainty in our plotted course. Plans shift as our stately tall ship's stays in tune with the Meltemi.

Leisurely days on Sea Cloud II are punctuated by easy meals taken in the sea-salted open air, while lectures fill us in on the fascinating history of the islands ahead. And for the bold, there's always the rigging to climb or the bosprit to edge out onto, the sea roaring below in a blur of blue and white. Whether you're bold or not, it's an exhilarating ride, with the wind carrying us fast and clean through Aegean waters.

“Boats bob lazily and the aroma of sage and thyme fills the air as we sip on local beer and swim in the crystal-clear sea”



Patmos greets us first, serene and welcoming with its dazzlingly bright white houses. We climb to the Monastery of Saint John and wander through the Patmian houses of Chora, where sunlight catches on walls and wooden shutters. On Ios, a Zodiac wet landing brings us to Manganari Beach with its calm waters and unhurried island pace of life.

Amorgos is ruggedly beautiful, with unravelling folds of rock and herb-scented hillsides. We cross

“With precision teamwork, the crew raise the canvas until the whole ship seems to breathe out – an awe-inspiring start to a voyage”



its spine, hairpin by hairpin, before spending time relaxing at a beach club in the gorgeous little town of Katapola. Boats bob lazily and the aroma of sage and thyme fills the air as we sip on local beer and swim in the crystal-clear sea. We wander the narrow streets in the sunshine, picking up local olive oil, herbs and zesty citron liqueur, the island's signature tippie.

Poros, with its lively harbour and easy charm, is the final port of call. Cafés and shops line the waterfront, so it's perfect for one last wander and one last deep breath of herb-infused air. We almost feel like sailors from centuries past and it's been a wonderful discovery of a Greece that feels more ancient and less travelled. The unique character and glittering blues of each island will stay with us, but the Meltemi defined our trip – a reminder that, in the Cyclades, the exact course of every journey is in the gift of the wind. 🌀



**SEA CLOUD CRUISES**

*In brief*

Sea Cloud ships operate select and low environmental impact sailings in the Mediterranean, as well as themed events and cruises in locations such as the Azores, Canaries, Caribbean and Central America.

Prices from €4,790 for a 7-night Summer Breeze Through the Aegean itinerary in July, taking in the Cyclades islands of Amorgos and Milos plus Nauplio and Poros in the Peloponnese.

[seacloud.com/en](http://seacloud.com/en)