



## **MSC MAGNIFICA TO OFFER AN UNPRECEDENTED COMBINATION OF SUN, BEACH, TRADITION AND CULTURE IN THE RED SEA THIS WINTER**

- *Visiting Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt, this brand-new 7-night itinerary offers guests an opportunity to explore 3 ancient civilizations and 3 UNESCO World Heritage Sites*
- *The world's-first cruise ship to homeport in Jeddah, opening the sea gate to access Saudi Arabia's unique heritage, rich culture and pristine environment*
- *Preferred Fly & Cruise packages through partnership with Saudia available to Jeddah for a seamless journey from start to finish*
- *MSC Virtuosa adds calls to Saudi Arabia in her winter 2021/22 programme in the Gulf, offering access to yet another UNESCO World Heritage Site*

**Geneva, Switzerland – 29 April 2021** – MSC Cruises revealed today details of the Company's brand-new itinerary in the Red Sea for the Winter 21/22 season. These first-time cruises calling destinations in Saudi Arabia, Jordan and Egypt promise culturally-rich destinations, some of the world's best beaches and a chance for guests to explore the region's deep-rooted traditions that date back centuries.

Homeporting in Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, *MSC Magnifica* will offer seven-night cruises, starting from 13 November 2021 through to the end of March 2022. From Jeddah, the ship will call Aqaba for Petra in Jordan, Safaga for Luxor in Egypt, then the other Saudi ports of AlWajh and Yanbu before returning back to Jeddah.

Located at the cross-roads of the three continents of the old world, Saudi Arabia is exceptionally rich in culture, traditions and heritage. With five UNESCO World Heritage Sites, including Historic Jeddah and Al-Hijr Archaeological Site in AlUla, both accessible to *MSC Magnifica's* guests, the Kingdom offers an unmatched voyage of discovery.

Saudi Arabia is home to striking natural wonders, breath-taking landscapes and untapped archaeological treasures. With year-round sunshine, topped with some of the world's most beautiful beaches and the thriving marine ecosystem of the Red Sea, the Kingdom is the must-visit destination this winter, ticking every box on the bucket list.

This itinerary will see MSC Cruises return to Egypt calling at the historic port of Safaga, from where guests will be able to reach Luxor - the world's largest open-air museum with world-renowned Ancient Egyptian sites. Rounding out this incredible itinerary is Aqaba in Jordan. The port dates back to 4,000 B.C. and from here guests are able to reach Petra - famous archaeological site and one of the new seven wonders of the world.

**Gianni Onorato, MSC Cruises' CEO, shared,** *"As an international cruise line renowned for offering guests unique opportunities to explore and discover the world, it is only natural that we are now making more accessible for our guests yet another brand-new destination. The introduction of Saudi Arabia to our winter programme is one of a kind itinerary as it also offers Egypt and Jordan in an unparalleled*

*combination of sun, beach, tradition and culture. Our guests can discover the untouched beauty of this region to its fullest and go ashore and explore plenty of undiscovered destinations.*

*“Not to mention that traveling through the Red Sea by cruise ship is one of the most spectacular ways to take in the stunning coastline and enjoy the region’s unique and still untouched beauty of sea and nature.”*

And as if that is not enough, as the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia prepares to host the inaugural Formula 1 Saudi Arabian Grand Prix 2021 on 5 December in Jeddah, guests will have the chance to follow this exciting global sports event during their trip aboard *MSC Magnifica*.

Sales will open on 1 May for all future guests and MSC Voyagers Club members will benefit from an additional 5% discount exclusively for a period of 10 days, on top of their usual 5% discount. This is one of the many benefits of the programme that rewards loyal MSC Cruises guests.

**Mark Robinson, Chief Commercial and Operations Officer at Cruise Saudi, said:** *“The landmark partnership with MSC Cruises is a perfect starting point on our journey, and aligns with our vision to develop mainstream cruising along the Saudi coastlines with Jeddah as the key homeport that offers a wide variety of pre- and post-cruise stay options. Jeddah benefits from its proximity to Europe and is easily reachable by plane within five hours from most major cities on the continent. Due to its warm weather, Saudi Arabia is an ideal destination for winter holidays and has the potential for year-round cruising.”*

### **Eight Days of Discovery**

Whether looking to explore unspoiled beaches with crystal blue waters or indulge in the authentic history and tradition of the Middle East, there is something for everyone on this inspirational voyage of discovery. Here are just a few of the highlights:

**JEDDAH, SAUDI ARABIA** – Homeporting in this vibrant city that blends history and modernity, guests will have their pick of sites to visit. AlBalad, the old town of Jeddah, dates back to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, boasts beautiful buildings, an ancient souk and a cultural melting-pot, and is one of UNESCO World Heritage sites Saudi Arabia has to offer. Jeddah is also known for its waterfront and modern shopping malls, offering entertainment and recreational activities to its visitors.

- **AQABA FOR PETRA, JORDAN** - This city rests on the Red Sea coast and is a haven for divers and history buffs alike. From snorkelling in the Aqaba Marine Park to Mamluk Castle and the Aqaba Archaeological Museum, this destination has something to satiate everyone’s interests. Aqaba's close proximity to Petra offers guests a chance to travel to this UNESCO World Heritage Site, inhabited since as early 7,000 BC, and discover the rare and unique rock-cut architecture.
- **SAFAGA FOR LUXOR, EGYPT** – A short distance up the Nile River from one of Egypt’s most spectacular destinations, the small city of Safaga is the gateway to Luxor. From the ruins of the Luxor and Karnak temples and the unforgettable Necropolis, where guests will find the Valley of Kings and the Valley of Queens, this is a destination not easily forgotten.
- **AL WAJH, SAUDI ARABIA** – Framed by turquoise seas and 100 km of immaculate beaches on either side, the Red Sea coastal city of AlWajh once served as one of the region’s central shipping ports. Its abandoned AlBalad old town features ancient Hejazi architecture made from Red Sea coral. It now serves as a coastal gateway to AlUla, home to Al-Hijr Archaeological Site (Madain Salih), Saudi Arabia’s cultural centrepiece and its first UNESCO World Heritage Site. Featuring more than 110

tombs carved from giant rock formations as well as ancient sites that date back to the 1st millennium BC.

- **YANBU, SAUDI ARABIA** – This major Red Sea port provides the perfect final stop on this 7-night cruise. The old town of Yanbu, located within walking-distance from the port, dates back 2,500 years, and offers one of the oldest souks, where traders used to come from places as far as Africa to sell their goods. The city is known as “the diving capital of Saudi Arabia”, and has become an increasingly attractive tourist destination due to its spectacular white sandy shores and lively coral reefs, offering plentiful opportunities for diving, snorkelling and water activities in the pristine Saudi Red Sea.

In addition, on their first day of the cruise guests will be able to enjoy the ultimate beach experience when the ship calls in the region of Yanbu and spend the day soaking in the sun on a spotless, private beach reserved exclusively for them.

#### **MSC Magnifica, one of MSC Cruises’ most elegant ships**

*MSC Magnifica* is one of MSC Cruises’ popular mid-size ships and offers masterful and elegant design, relaxed refinement, a high ratio of balcony cabins, large dining areas with four restaurants and 11 bars, a swimming pool with a sliding roof magrodome, a spectacular theatre, full-scale casino, panoramic nightclub and a 4D cinema.

#### **A dedicated Fly&Cruise programme with direct connections from most major European capitals and New York**

To make the holiday stress-free, **Fly & Cruise preferred packages** will be available thanks to a dedicated partnership with the country’s national airline Saudia, a long-time member of SkyTeam. With Friday night flights out of most major European airports and New York, holidaymakers will conveniently arrive in Jeddah the night before their cruise begins. Thanks to the ship’s late departure on Saturday evening, there will be time to enjoy Jeddah before the cruise departs, making the most of their stay. The same variety of return flights awaits guests for a Saturday morning journey home offering guests maximum of comfort and peace of mind to enjoy their holiday to the utmost.

#### **MSC Virtuosa Adds Calls to Saudi Arabia for Winter 2021/2022 Programme in The Gulf**

*MSC Virtuosa* will also be making her debut in Saudi Arabia as her winter 2021/2022 programme in the Arabian Gulf has been enriched with calls in the port of Dammam, visiting AlAhsa oasis, another UNESCO World Heritage site. *MSC Virtuosa* will spend her first winter season homeporting in Dubai, United Arab Emirates. From there, the ship will sail to the nearby modern metropolis of Abu Dhabi, on to Sir Bani Yas Island, where guests will have a chance to discover an exotic array of wildlife or bask in the warm sun on the immaculate beaches, all exclusive to MSC Cruises on the days which the ships call. The ship also calls Doha, the futuristic capital of Qatar, before returning to Dubai with an overnight in the city to discover all the marvels it has to offer.

To find out more visit our websites.

**ENDS**