



Explora  
JOURNEYS

# PRESS KIT



FEBRUARY 2022

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# MEDIA BACKGROUNDER

## OVERVIEW

Explora Journeys is a new luxury travel brand with a unique proposition, connecting travellers with the ocean, themselves and their environments.

Explora Journeys stems from the long-held vision of the Aponte Vago family to redefine the ocean experience and create a category of its own.

The brand's mission is to offer guests a chance to experience an **"Ocean State of Mind"** – the way we refer to the mindset that can be achieved when we escape to the ocean, relax, create memories, and reconnect with what matters most in our lives.

A fleet of four ships, two of which are already under construction, will be created under the Explora Journeys brand with one launched each year from 2023 to 2026.



## OWNERSHIP

Explora Journeys is privately owned by the MSC Group and run by the Executive Chairman of MSC Group's Cruise Division Mr Pierfrancesco Vago, his wife Alexa Aponte Vago and the Aponte family.

The MSC Group was founded in 1970 by Gianluigi Aponte who started his career, as a Captain operating passenger ferries in the Mediterranean.

MSC Cruises, one of two brands that sit within the Cruises Division of MSC Group, is the world's third-largest cruise brand and the fastest-growing global cruise brand.

The MSC Group is the world's largest privately held Swiss-based shipping and logistic conglomerate with over 300 years of maritime heritage, headquartered in Geneva. A global company, driven by passion, dedication, and an unwavering entrepreneurial spirit.

## MSC FOUNDATION

The MSC Foundation, a private non-profit foundation, was established by the Aponte family to direct and advance the MSC Group's environmental, humanitarian and sustainable development commitments worldwide.

The Foundation works to restore the critical balance between people and the environment.

The Foundation's ethics are inspired by the family-owned MSC Group's values and above all, a sense of responsibility for the planet, its oceans and people.

Their mission is to utilise MSC's global reach and unique knowledge of the sea to take immediate action that contributes to protecting and nurturing the blue planet and all its people.

The Foundation encourages the sustainable management and protection of ecosystems, empowers vulnerable communities around the world to realise their full potential, promotes quality, equitable and inclusive education to enhance durable individual and collective development and helps disaster-struck populations towards recovery.



4 LUXURY CRUISE SHIPS  
BUILT BY FINCANTIERI IN ITALY



2023  
EXPLORA I

2024  
EXPLORA II

2025  
EXPLORA III

2026  
EXPLORA IV

OVERVIEW

461 OCEAN FRONT SUITES

- 1 Owner’s Residence
- 22 Ocean Residences
- 67 Ocean Penthouses
- 371 Ocean Suites
- Including 82 multi-gen-friendly connecting suites

Featuring

- Private terraces that are amongst the largest in the category
- Large floor-to-ceiling windows with elegant interiors
- Spacious walk-in wardrobe with a seated vanity area

9 DISTINCT INCLUSIVE DINING EXPERIENCES

- Focused on healthy, delicious food from local, sustainable sources

NUMEROUS LOUNGING AND ENTERTAINMENT OPTIONS

- Several indoor and outdoor bar and lounge experiences with curated entertainment and intimate performances
- Casino, art gallery and curated shopping experiences

GENEROUS OUTDOOR DECKS

- Three heated outdoor pools and one indoor pool with retractable glass roof
- 64 private cabanas
- Several indoor and outdoor whirlpools
- Poolside dining and lounging

HOLISTIC WELLNESS AND FITNESS

- Over 700 sqm (7,500 sq ft) of indoor and outdoor wellness facilities
- Spacious thermal area
- Nine treatment rooms
- Beauty salon with barber services
- Over 270 sqm (2,900 sq ft) of fitness facilities with latest equipment
- Fitness studio for group or personal training
- Panoramic running track
- Sports Court for touch tennis and half basketball

THE LATEST ENVIRONMENTAL-SUPPORTING TECHNOLOGIES

- Hybrid-ready energy solutions
- Waste-management and energy-saving solutions
- No single-plastic used on-board and ashore



DESIGN

The European family roots and sense of style informs an intuitive appreciation of design and luxury, which Explora Journeys embodies through its modern, cosmopolitan, boutique hotel vibe – vibrant, yet intimate.

Explora Journeys engaged **Martin Francis**, the accomplished British designer and architect with decades of experience working on some of the most iconic yachts on the water as part of the design team, to ensure the exterior profile of the Explora Journeys’ ships are more aligned to a superyacht than a traditional cruise ship.

Martin designed the unique magrodome over the central pool, and consulted with **Eckersley O’Callaghan**, the structural designers behind Apple’s glassy architecture, on the structural glass engineering.

Other designers include **SMC Design**, **AD Associates** and **De Jorio Luxury and Yacht Projects**, who has worked with the Aponte Vago family for a number of years.



LOBBY BAR

HOMES AT SEA / SUITES

Accommodation on EXPLORA I comprises suites, penthouses and residences.

All are ocean front and will feature private terrace and large floor-to-ceiling windows, as well as comfortable daybeds and an alfresco dining area, to present a luxurious, spacious and private home at sea whilst onboard.

The **Ocean Terrace Suites** and **Ocean Grand Terrace Suites** will be amongst the largest in the category starting at 35 sqm (377sqft). Suites include lounge areas, private refrigerated mini bar - replenished according to the guest preferences - espresso machine and tea maker with a complimentary selection of coffee and teas.

The **Ocean Penthouses** will offer over 43 sqm (463sqft), large floor-to-ceiling windows and expansive terraces, separate dining tables for four guests, spacious work desk areas, and additional services including complimentary dry cleaning.

The **Ocean Residences** will offer a true sense of being at home at sea with sweeping deck and terrace spaces which include a private outdoor whirlpool, living and dining rooms, and dedicated private butler services.

The **Owner’s Residence**, with a total suite area of 280 sqm (3,014sqft), will feature a signature lounge and dining area, a panoramic ocean-front outdoor area with a private infinity whirlpool and dedicated butler services.



OWNER'S RESIDENCE



SUSTAINABILITY

Explora Journeys’ deep respect for the ocean is the central component of the journey, never forceful nor intrusive upon the destinations and local communities, and conscientious of the environment and sustainability.

Environmental supporting technologies and emission control systems will be employed throughout including:

- Provision for battery storage to allow future hybrid power generation
- Ballast Water Treatment System USCD Approved
- Smart heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems (HVAC)
- Trim optimisation software
- LED lighting, high-efficiency appliances
- RINA Dolphin Certificate reduced underwater noise
- Selective Catalytic Reduction (SCR) technology enabling a reduction in nitrogen emissions by 90 per cent.

Destination experiences will be designed to leave a positive impression and footprint on the places and people visited by placing a spotlight on local talents, craftsmanship, culture, gastronomy, traditions.

The MSC Group pledge to reach net zero greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions in its cruise marine operation by 2050.

Explora Journeys will support and give back to noble environmental causes through the MSC Foundation.

Onboard initiatives include:

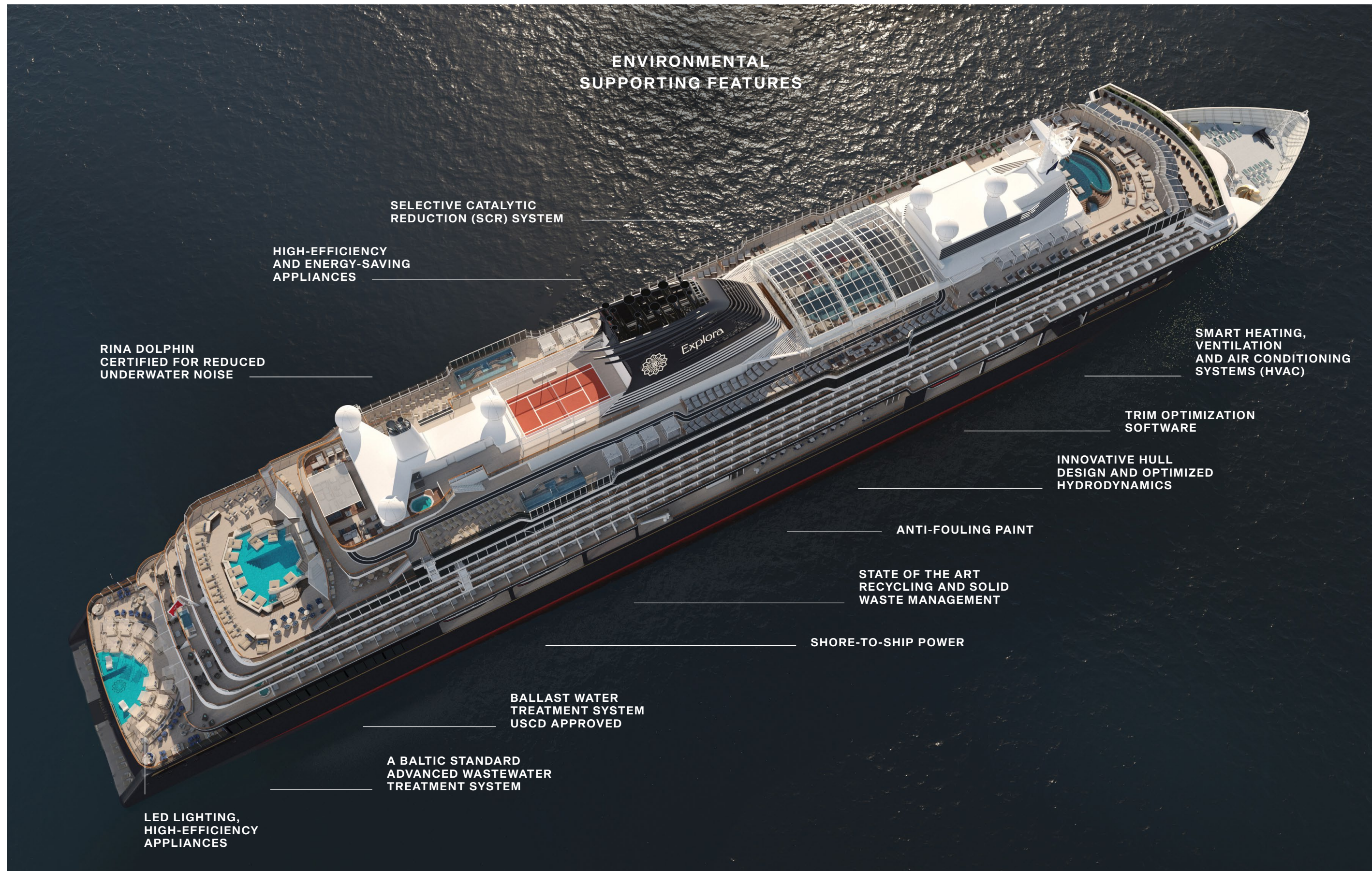
- Water fountains throughout the ship to offer refillable water stations and avoid a usage and wastage of plastic
- Waste-management and energy-saving solutions
- No single-plastic used on-board and ashore

Explora Journeys are Members of the Global Sustainable Tourism Council and seek to ensure that all Tour Operators, partners and suppliers have awareness and compliance of the programme.

Next generation of Explora Journeys’ ships, actively looking at a range of technologies including wind, hydrogen, and fuel cells to power them, as well as LNG using bio-LNG.







## ENVIRONMENTAL SUPPORTING FEATURES

SELECTIVE CATALYTIC  
REDUCTION (SCR) SYSTEM

HIGH-EFFICIENCY  
AND ENERGY-SAVING  
APPLIANCES

RINA DOLPHIN  
CERTIFIED FOR REDUCED  
UNDERWATER NOISE

SMART HEATING,  
VENTILATION  
AND AIR CONDITIONING  
SYSTEMS (HVAC)

TRIM OPTIMIZATION  
SOFTWARE

INNOVATIVE HULL  
DESIGN AND OPTIMIZED  
HYDRODYNAMICS

ANTI-FOULING PAINT

STATE OF THE ART  
RECYCLING AND SOLID  
WASTE MANAGEMENT

SHORE-TO-SHIP POWER

BALLAST WATER  
TREATMENT SYSTEM  
USCD APPROVED

A BALTIC STANDARD  
ADVANCED WASTEWATER  
TREATMENT SYSTEM

LED LIGHTING,  
HIGH-EFFICIENCY  
APPLIANCES



RECRUITMENT & SERVICE

Explora Journey’s will offer respectful, intuitive hospitality.

Explora Journeys’ culture of authentic, warm and intuitive service will be delivered by a passionate, multicultural and diverse team.

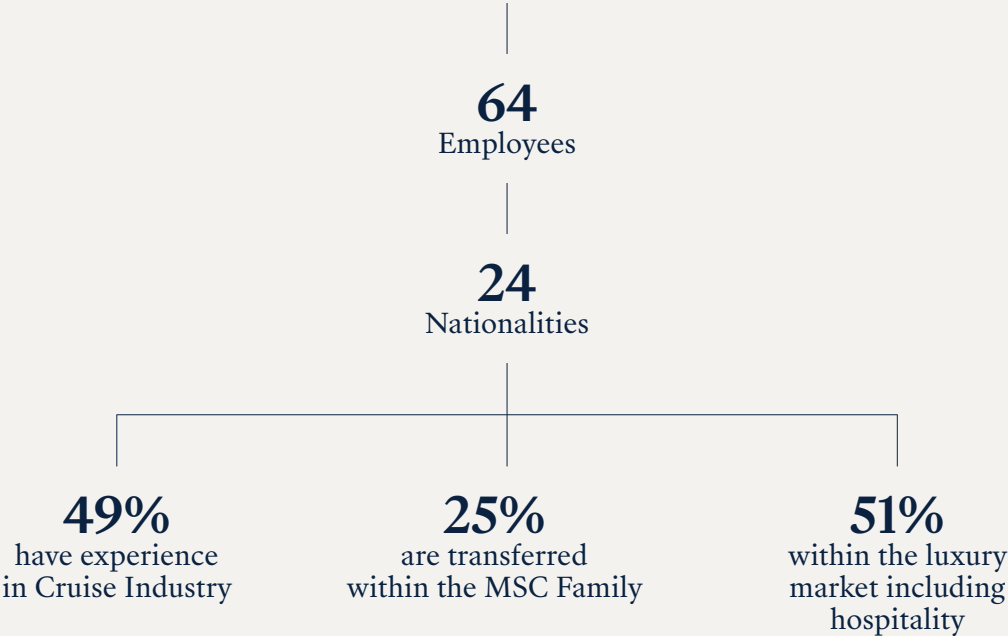
Our Perfect Hosts will deliver an intuitive service style that epitomises a sense of effortless luxury, where guests can truly relax and be themselves.

We have created a team virtually - searching talent, recruiting, hiring, onboarding and working together.

We look to hire differently for varying mindsets and staff thinking differently.

Diversity and talent density is key for our staff.

We have a **50:50** male / female ratio on the front line and leadership roles spanning:



DESTINATIONS & ITINERARIES

Explora Journeys will offer the perfect blend of celebrated destinations and lesser-known off the beaten path locations, focusing on a slower pace, spending more time in each destination, to ensure guests can feel fully exhilarated and get under the skin of the local culture and environment, whilst not leaving their mark on the destination.

The on-and off-the-beaten-path itineraries are seen from an original point of view with authentic experiences and deeper immersion into the local culture.



**Boundless Discoveries**  
Boutique in nature and bolder in adventure. Must do experiences with hidden wonders and VIP access.

**Enchanting Experiences**  
Intimate and small groups. Tailor-made adventures. Explorers with expertise in their field of study to enhance the experience, meticulously designed to usher in the next level of exclusivity.

Itineraries include overland expeditions which capture the essence of the location with surprise elements for a truly memorable experience.

**Beyond Boundaries**  
Once-in-a-lifetime experiences for thrill seekers and adrenalin junkies.

**In Country Immersions**  
Designed as a three or more-day overland excursions, all-inclusive experiences for intimately sized groups starting before or after the sailing, takes you deeper into the culture of the visiting countries.

**Tailored Experiences**  
The travel equivalent of haute couture, our private experiences are tailor-made for those who value rarity in its most authentic form.



Further detail around the destinations and itineraries will be released in due course.



## WELLBEING

The Ocean State of Mind homes in on pampering, improving, maintaining and rejuvenating.

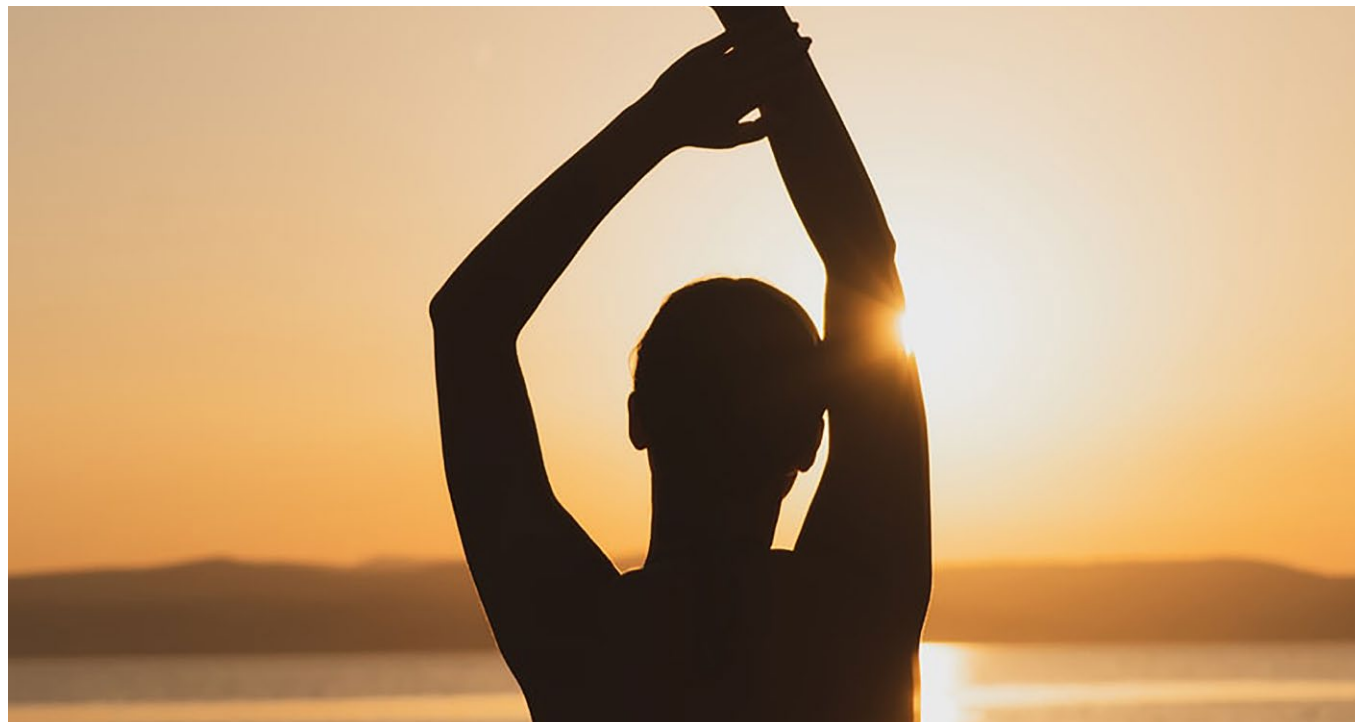
Spread over 970 sqm (10 440 sq ft), the ship will offer both indoor and outdoor wellness, spa and fitness facilities.

Facilities will include:

- Spacious thermal area
- Nine treatment rooms for wellness and spa therapies
- Two VIP Double Spa suites with private facilities, including outdoor deck
- Beauty Salon with barber services
- Fitness Area with latest Technogym equipment including a panoramic, outdoor running track and fitness studio for group or personal trainings
- Wellness experiences in destinations ensure that relaxation and rejuvenation is enjoyable both onboard and ashore

The wellbeing experience is based on programs combining fitness, nutrition, sleep and recovery, body and mind, thereby ensuring that you will be connecting to yourself, to others and to nature. Guests can also opt for a la carte services.

From specialised treatment rooms to state-of-the-art fitness equipment, group workout classes to personal training appointments, expertly created tailor-made programmes make keeping well while on holiday effortless and enjoyable.



## LEISURE

Generous outdoor decks – offering more than 2,500 sqm (26,909 sq ft) of spectacular sea views – combined with numerous indoor and outdoor whirlpools on the ship's promenade deck.

3

heated outdoor pools,  
including 1 adults - only

1

indoor heated pool with retractable glass roof,  
largest and only in category  
at 1,200 sqm (12,917 sq ft)

64

private cabanas





LOUNGING, ENTERTAINMENT AND AMENITIES

Lobby bar	Poolside aft lounge
Observation lounge	Coffee lounge
Whisky bar & cigar room	Casino
Chef's kitchen and private dining room	Art gallery
Forward lounge	Curated shopping experiences

Several poolside and outdoor bars and lounges



CULINARY EXPERIENCE

A selection of nine distinctive, inclusive culinary experiences, celebrating global culinary talents and cultures, whilst always focusing on healthy eating and local sources

Sophisticated concept restaurant celebrating up-and-coming chefs	Chef's kitchen with private dining and culinary school
Effortless all-day dining restaurant	Pan Asian restaurant
Steakhouse experience	Mediterranean-style restaurant
International-style restaurant	Coffee lounge
Poolside dining	In-suite dining





TIMELINE

1	1675	<p><b>FIRST RECORD OF THE APONTE FAMILY’S INVOLVEMENT IN MARITIME TRANSPORT TO AND FROM NAPLES</b></p> <p>The Aponte family records date back to the 17<sup>th</sup> century and testify to its long and unbroken seafaring traditions.</p>	5	1973	<p><b>CAPTAIN APONTE ACQUIRES THE COMPANY’S THIRD SHIP</b></p> <p>A carrier named Isle.</p>	9	2019	<p><b>MICHAEL UNGERER - CEO</b></p> <p>Michael Ungerer joins the MSC Group as the CEO of the company’s newly created luxury division.</p>	13	2023	<p><b>MAIDEN JOURNEY EXPLORA I</b></p>
2	1940	<p><b>GIANLUIGI APONTE IS BORN IN SORRENTO, ITALY</b></p> <p>Years later, he started his career as a captain operating passenger ferries in the Mediterranean for his family’s business after graduating from the Italian Maritime Academy</p>	6	1988	<p><b>MSC ENTERS THE CRUISE BUSINESS</b></p> <p>MSC announces its entry into the cruise business, purchasing the iconic liner, Monterey.</p>	10	2020	<p><b>MSC</b></p> <p>The second-largest container shipping line in the world, and the third-largest cruise brand in the world.</p>	14	2024	<p><b>MAIDEN JOURNEY EXPLORA II</b></p>
3	1970	<p><b>MEDITERRANEAN SHIPPING COMPANY IS FOUNDED</b></p> <p>Captain Aponte founded the Mediterranean Shipping Company in Brussels, Belgium in 1970, beginning with one small conventional ship, the MV Patricia.</p>	7	2013	<p><b>PIERFRANCESCO VAGO</b></p> <p>Pierfrancesco Vago is named Executive Chairman of MSC Group’s cruise business and broader passenger division.</p>	11	2021	<p><b>SUMMER</b></p> <p>MSC launches Explora Journeys, and celebrates the steel cutting of EXPLORA I.</p> <p>Bookings for the Inaugural Collection open, as well as the steel cutting of EXPLORA II.</p>	15	2025	<p><b>MAIDEN JOURNEY EXPLORA III</b></p>
4	1971	<p><b>CAPTAIN APONTE ACQUIRES THE COMPANY’S SECOND SHIP</b></p> <p>A bigger vessel which he named after his wife, Rafaela.</p>	8	2018	<p><b>ENTERING THE ULTRA-LUXURY MARKET</b></p> <p>The MSC Group announces its intentions to enter the ultra-luxury market.</p>	12	2022	<p><b>EXPLORA I</b></p> <p>Keel Laying for EXPLORA I.</p>	16	2026	<p><b>MAIDEN JOURNEY EXPLORA IV</b></p>



# FACTS & FIGURES – EXPLORA I

4

Fleet of  
**LUXURY SHIPS**

Built by  
**FINCANTIERI**

**RINA DOLPHIN**  
certified

2023

**FIRST SHIP**  
Scheduled to set sail

Remaining  
three ships  
to sail in  
2024 / 2025 / 2026

248

**METRES LONG**  
813 ft

32

**METRES WIDE**  
105 ft

56<sub>m</sub>

**HEIGHT ABOVE  
WATER LINE**  
184 ft

63,900

**TONNAGE**

1.25 : 1

Guests per hosts  
ratio

640

**Team members**

8

**Inaugural Journeys**

Mediterranean  
Northern Europe  
United Kingdom

Iceland  
& Greenland

U.S. East Coast  
& Canada

Caribbean  
South America

Hawaii

3

**NIGHTS**

Journeys starting at

2023 / 2024

Bookings are open

1

**Owner's Residence**

22

**Ocean Residences**

67

**Ocean Penthouses**

371

**Ocean Suites**

82

multi-gen-friendly  
connecting suites

461

**OCEAN FRONT  
SUITES**

All with floor to  
ceiling windows  
and private terrace

16,600<sub>sqm</sub>

**TOTAL PUBLIC  
SPACE**  
178,680sqft

10,240<sub>sqm</sub>

**TOTAL INDOOR  
PUBLIC SPACE**  
112,160 sq ft

6,250<sub>sqm</sub>

**TOTAL OUTDOOR  
PUBLIC SPACE**  
67,275 sq ft

6,5<sub>sqm</sub>

**OUTDOOR SPACE  
PER GUEST**  
70 sq ft

700<sub>sqm</sub> +

**INDOOR /  
OUTDOOR SPA**  
and wellness area  
7,535+ sq ft

3

**OUTDOOR POOLS**

1

**INDOOR POOL**  
With a retractable  
glass roof

64

**PRIVATE  
CABANAS**

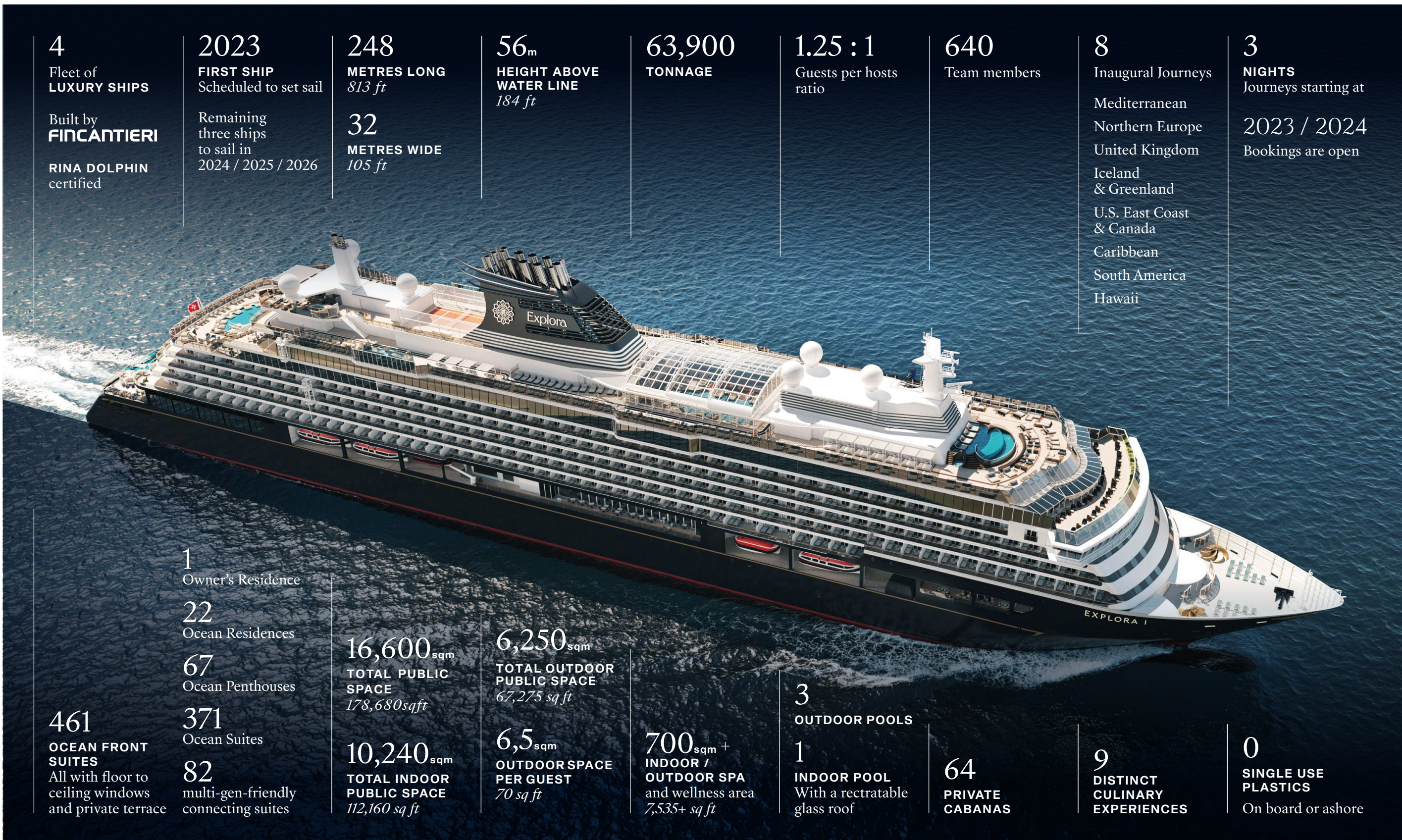
9

**DISTINCT  
CULINARY  
EXPERIENCES**

0

**SINGLE USE  
PLASTICS**

On board or ashore





# KEY SPOKESPEOPLE



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**MICHAEL UNGERER**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Explora Journeys

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As Chief Executive Officer, Michael Ungerer is charged with leading all aspects of the creation, development and execution of Explora Journeys. With the first of four luxury superyachts scheduled to set sail in 2023, Mr. Ungerer recruits and leads a multicultural team of highly talented individuals who bring together a breadth of luxury hospitality experience. Employing a customer-centric mindset, he also brings his extensive knowledge of the travel industry to his role, spanning marine operations, sustainability efforts, new buildings, hotel operations, shoreside activities, and more.

Prior to joining Explora Journeys, Mr. Ungerer held various leadership positions with Carnival Corporation across different geographies and brands. Most recently, he was COO of Carnival Asia where he coordinated the company’s efforts to gain market entry in the region. Prior to that, he served as President of AIDA Cruises, Carnival’s most profitable cruise line. Before working for Carnival, Mr. Ungerer held a variety of management roles with brands such as Norwegian Cruise Line, Sonesta Resorts, and The Ritz-Carlton. From 2013 to 2015, Mr. Ungerer served as the founding Chairman of CLIA Germany, the industry association that represents the interests of the German cruise industry.

Mr. Ungerer studied Economics at Leopold Franzens University in Innsbruck, Austria and at London Business School. He graduated from the Institute of Hospitality Management in Salzburg, and holds a Global Executive MBA from INSEAD. He has also completed INSEAD’s Independent Directors Programme. Originally hailing from the mountains of Austria, he has lived in six countries on three continents, and currently calls Geneva, Switzerland home.



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**CHRIS AUSTIN**  
Chief Sales Officer  
Explora Journeys

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Chris Austin is Chief Sales Officer for the new Luxury Division of the MSC Group, Explora Journeys. In this position, he is responsible for the line’s overall global go to market strategy across all sales channels and leads the Global Sales Organisation and all B2B partner trade marketing initiatives.

Austin joined Explora Journeys in November 2020. Prior to that, he spent 4 years as SVP Global Marketing & Sales at Seabourn and formerly 25 years with Starwood Hotels & Resorts, with his final position as Vice President Global Luxury & Leisure Sales.

Chris has received numerous awards and accolades throughout his career, including Virtuoso Cruise Ambassador of the Year 2019, “Top Luxury Sales Executive Worldwide – 2019 & 2016” by readers of Luxury Travel Advisor; “Most Innovative Hotel Executive” by U.S. Travel Professionals in the Travvy Awards; and “ASTAAllied Member of the Year” by the world’s largest association of travel professionals.

Austin is passionate about people and results and works tirelessly to uncover innovative sales and marketing strategies that reflect the current global business environment. Known by colleagues and industry partners as a unique and remarkable leader of integrity, he builds trust and credibility with leadership, colleagues and customers. In addition, he empowers and advocates his team to make a positive impact with partners and on the organisation. He is one of the industry’s leading advocates for the global travel advisor community and has worked tirelessly to support the future health and longevity of the industry.



Discover the  
Ocean State of Mind playlist on



APPLE MUSIC



SPOTIFY



DEEZER

To learn more about Explora Journeys,  
visit [ExploraJourneys.com](https://ExploraJourneys.com)  
or follow along on  
Instagram, Twitter and Facebook.

*@ExploraJourneys on*



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