

Date Amended: **1 October 2026**

General: All presentations can be tailored for specific voyages, interests and/or passenger demographics and each last no longer than 40-45 minutes, with time then for questions. Strong use of visuals with modest use of embedded video, with content adjusted where the demographic (such as family-orientated voyages) requires some adjustment to mitigate potentially distressing content. Strategic presentations are explicitly the Presenter's own interpretations and views but are delivered in a neutral manner.

GENERAL (Non-Destination Specific)(18):

Title: COMMANDING A WARSHIP
Summary: While not quite as glamorous as a cruise ship, a warship is a powerhouse on the water - fast, formidable and crucial for protecting our oceans and the freedom of navigation we sometimes forget we rely on. Join Admiral Simon Hardern for a rare, insider look at life on the high seas as a Royal Navy Commanding Officer. He'll share tales from global hotbeds like the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf.

Title: NAVAL TRADITIONS AND ETIQUETTE
Summary: Most naval services around the world run on good order, discipline, and a healthy dose of tradition - because let's face it, without them, things would probably descend into chaos (and not the fun kind). Join Simon Hardern as he takes you on a sometimes-irreverent tour through the more unusual and hilarious naval traditions, all from the perspective of someone who's lived through them for 34 years. Get ready for a few laughs, some eye-rolls, and maybe even a surprise or two - because naval etiquette isn't always as buttoned-up as it seems.

Title: HOW SHIPS AVOID COLLISIONS AND GROUNDINGS - THE RULES OF THE ROAD FOR THE OCEANS!
Summary: This enrichment talk explains how modern ships safely share some of the busiest waterways on Earth. Using clear examples, Simon Hardern introduces the International Regulations for Preventing Collisions at Sea (COLREGs), the global 'rules of the road' that govern right-of-way, lights, shapes, and sound signals in all conditions of visibility. It explores how bridge teams combine training, judgement and technology with pilotage, traffic separation schemes, buoyage and vessel traffic services to manage risk. Real-world scenarios - head-on, crossing, and night navigation - show how accidents are avoided, and why professionalism on the bridge is critical to passenger safety.

Title: MAPPING THE WORLD'S OCEANS (HOW A CRUISE SHIP NAVIGATES WITHOUT HITTING SOMETHING)(CAN BE ADAPTED TO ANY CRUISE DESTINATION BY OCEAN/SEA)
Summary: Only a fraction of the world's seabed has been surveyed to modern standards - we know more about Mars than parts of our own oceans. This presentation explores how hydrography underpins global trade and safe navigation. Simon Hardern takes the audience on a journey from the era of hand-drawn charts to today's satellite positioning and digital navigation systems. It explains how cruise ships rely on precision mapping, real-time data and

advanced bridge systems to operate safely. The future promises even greater integration and automation. It is a story of science, exploration and quiet precision - because the seabed, unlike the moon, is something ships cannot afford to ignore.

Title: GLOBAL WARMING IMPACT ON SEA LEVELS (CAN BE ADAPTED TO ANY CRUISE DESTINATION BY OCEAN/SEA)
Summary: In this presentation, Simon Hardern explores how our planet is warming at the fastest rate in recorded history, with 2024 marking the first-year global temperatures exceeded 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels. We examine the key drivers of climate change, the accelerating rise in sea levels, the dramatic loss of Arctic ice and the increasingly severe weather events affecting millions worldwide. Through clear data, vivid visuals, and real-world examples, we uncover how climate change is reshaping ecosystems, economies and human health. Finally, we look at future projections, tipping points, and the urgent actions - from local initiatives to global cooperation - needed to secure a sustainable future.

Title: A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE CRUISE SHIP INDUSTRY
Summary: Welcome aboard, fellow adventurers! In this whirlwind cruise through time, Simon Hardern will sail you from the stately steamers of the 1800s - when 'all-inclusive' meant surviving the voyage - to today's floating cities with Wi-Fi faster than the wind. We'll meet famous ships, a few icebergs, and plenty of innovation, all while peeking at the future of zero-emission, AI-powered ocean wanderers. Think of it as 200 years of maritime madness packed into one breezy voyage - no seasickness tablets required!

Title: THE EVOLUTION OF SHIPBUILDING
Summary: From wooden wonders that burned faster than they sailed to today's billion-dollar floating cities with robot bartenders, this journey through 175 years of shipbuilding proves one thing: humans never stop tinkering with things that float. Simon Hardern steers you from clippers and clanking ironclads to the leviathans of the cruise era- complete with laser-cut steel, Azipods and Wi-Fi at sea (because heaven forbid we miss a dog video mid-Atlantic). It's a voyage of invention, disaster, and triumph - where the unsinkable sometimes sinks, the unimaginable sails and the shipyard always smells faintly of paint and optimism.

Title: THE ANATOMY OF A CRUISE SHIP – UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES IT ALL WORK
Summary: Ever wandered the decks, spotted a mysterious dome, aerial, or funnel gadget, and thought, 'is that important … or just decorative?' Join Simon Hardern for a good-humoured session that lifts the lid on the strange, wonderful and occasionally baffling features hiding in plain sight around a cruise ship. From the 'golf balls' beaming TV shows from space to the quiet heroes keeping passengers safe, connected and freshly ventilated, you'll finally know what you're looking at. No engineering degree required -just curiosity, a sense of fun, and perhaps the ability to pretend you always knew this stuff.

Title: OFF THE EDGE OF THE MAP - WHO WAS THE GREATEST EXPLORER OF ALL?
Summary: Columbus, Magellan, Drake and Shackleton are household names, but are they really history's greatest explorers? Drawing on 34 years of seagoing experience in the Royal Navy, Simon Hardern puts the great voyagers under a sailor's scrutiny: how they navigated, how they led their crews far from home, the risks they took and what they actually found. Meet the Chinese admiral whose treasure fleets dwarfed anything Europe could launch, the Portuguese captain who opened the sea route to India, the Yorkshireman who charted the Pacific, the Polynesian wayfinder who guided him, and the Norwegian who beat everyone to the South Pole. Then the talk leaps forward into the last 100 years, from Everest and the Moon to the deepest point of the ocean, before revealing who truly deserves to be called the

greatest explorer. Expect surprising facts, a little myth-busting and a final twist about the least explored place on Earth.

Title: 15 GREAT MARITIME EXPERIENCES
Summary: A sweeping journey through the world's most compelling waterways, in this presentation Simon Hardern curates 15 extraordinary maritime experiences across rivers, lakes, canals and ocean extremes. It blends natural wonder, human history and engineering achievement, from the Amazon's vast flow and the Nile's ancient civilisations to the Panama and Suez canals that reshaped global trade. Inland seas and remote passages reveal scale, isolation and geopolitical significance, while polar routes and storm-lashed capes showcase the ocean at its most powerful. It is designed to inspires curiosity, enriches understanding and highlights how voyages by water can transform perspective, connecting landscapes, cultures and history in unforgettable ways.

Title: AROUND THE WORLD IN EIGHT PLACES
Summary: In 1872, Jules Verne sent the fictional Phileas Fogg racing around the world in just eighty days. More than 150 years later, the world is smaller, faster and more connected, but perhaps even more extraordinary. If you could choose just eight places to experience our planet today, where would you go? Join Simon Hardern on a personal journey around the modern world, selecting eight remarkable destinations that reveal how history, geography, technology and human ambition have shaped the planet we know today. From great cities and ancient cultures to engineering marvels, maritime crossroads and landscapes that have influenced civilisation, each stop tells a very different story. Along the way, we will discover what Phileas Fogg might recognise, what would astonish him and how dramatically travel has changed since Verne imagined his famous adventure. Eight places. One planet. And a world of stories waiting to be discovered.

Title: HOW DRONES AND AI ARE CHANGING MODERN WARFARE
Summary: From Ukraine to the Strait of Hormuz, autonomous systems and AI have changed warfare immeasurably in the past 5 years - not a month goes by without another step change. Simon Hardern explores modern warfare as it is actually being fought today, offering a thought-provoking analysis of conflict that is closer to home than most realise.

Title: THE WORLD IN 2046 - STORMS, SHIFTS AND SURPRISING HOPE
Summary: While you're sailing the oceans, the world beyond the horizon is changing fast. By 2046, new trade routes open in the Arctic, technology reshapes daily life, power shifts toward the Indo-Pacific, and climate redraws coastlines. Supply chains stretch and harden, space becomes contested, and geopolitics grows more complex. But it's not all turbulence. Innovation accelerates, health improves, clean energy advances and new partnerships emerge. In this talk, Simon Hardern explores what the next twenty years may bring - not with alarm, but with perspective … because understanding tomorrow's world makes today's journey even more fascinating.

Title: WHAT ON EARTH?! - FACTS THAT WILL REWIRE YOUR BRAIN
Summary: From the crushing depths of the ocean beneath your feet to the farthest edges of the observable universe, the world is stranger, bigger and more wonderful than most of us ever stop to notice. In this presentation, Simon Hardern takes you on a tour of genuinely mind-bending facts across space, the human body, animals, history, psychology, food, technology, geography, and language - including words for feelings you've always had but never been able to name. Along the way there are quiz rounds, record-breakers, and a few facts that will make you look at everyday things - strawberries, carrots, your own reflection - completely differently!

Title: HOW NATO WORKS
Summary: Since its formation in 1949, the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) has shaped global security, from ending the Cold War to leading counter-terror campaigns in Iraq, Afghanistan, and Libya. Today, the Alliance faces fresh challenges, with Euro-Atlantic security threatened by strategic competition and instability - none more pressing than the Russian Federation's direct threat to Allied security. With 32 member nations, every decision NATO makes requires consensus (yes, it's as complicated as it sounds!). In this behind-the-scenes presentation, Admiral Simon Hardern reveals how NATO navigates military and political complexities to safeguard the democratic freedoms we too often take for granted.

Title: THE INTERNET'S UNDERWORLD AND CRYPTO CURRENCY - MYTH VERSUS REALITY
Summary: What lies beneath the internet we use every day? In this revealing talk, Simon Hardern explores the hidden world of the Dark Web and Crypto Currency - the marketplaces, myths and modern crimes that rarely make the full headlines. From the rise of Bitcoin and secret online bazaars to ransomware, romance scams and cyber investigations, this is a beginners guide to a digital underworld that affects us more than we might think. Sensational in reputation, often misunderstood in reality - he separates fact from fiction and uncovers how this shadowy realm quietly touches our everyday lives.

Title: MANAGING AIRLINE CRASH RESPONSES – HUMAN RESILIENCE WHEN THE UNTHINKABLE HAPPENS
Summary: Flying might be the safest way to travel (next to cruising, of course!), but airlines prepare meticulously for the rare chance of an accident. From planning for 'non-normal' events to managing the aftermath, Simon Hardern takes you behind the scenes of aviation safety. Drawing from his firsthand experiences supporting crash responses in the USA and the southern Pacific, he shares powerful stories of human courage, compassion, and resilience. This isn't just about crisis management - it's about the extraordinary hope that emerges even in the darkest moments.

Title: THE NEW SILK ROAD
Summary: Since 2013, China's New Silk Road has been remaking the global map with railways, highways, ports, and pipelines stretching across 150+ countries. It promises to revive ancient trade routes, but with its potential to boost global trade comes a fair share of controversy. Simon Hardern takes you on a journey through this colossal project, unpacking the strategic concerns it raises for Western democracies and how it's reshaping the Far East and Pacific. Is it a trade revolution or a geopolitical chess move? Tune in to find out!

Title: BRICS - BRAZIL, RUSSIA, INDIA, CHINA, SOUTH AFRICA - THE BLOC RESHAPING GLOBAL POWER
Summary: BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) is a club that began with four giant nations - Brazil, Russia, India and China- who realised they were far too big, loud and ambitious to sit quietly at the back of the global classroom. Later, they invited South Africa, and now half the world seems to be queuing up to join, like it's the hottest nightclub in geopolitics. Together they represent massive populations, booming economies and the occasional disagreement conducted with impressive politeness. Love them or puzzle over them, Simon Hardern will cover how BRICS is reshaping global power - and doing it without any official headquarters, dress code or even matching stationery.

Country Briefs (Thank Goodness For! Series)

THANK GOODNESS FOR!
This is a series of 40 to 45-minute destination briefings delivered prior to visiting a country. Ever paused to wonder what the world would look like without the country? Well, this lively series turns every country along our route into a treasure hunt - the inventions, the buildings and the amazing personalities that helped contribute towards making our world the wonder it is today. Expect surprising facts, a healthy dose of myth-busting; part history, part detective story, sometimes irreverent, Simon Hardern aims to make a cruise guest look at a country name in a new, thought-provoking way. Countries currently covered: Argentina, Australia, Baltic (all countries except Germany and Russia) Brazil, Canada, France, Greece, Italy, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Spain, Taiwan, Turkey, and Vietnam.

Ports of Call (Landfall Series)

LANDFALL
This is a series of 35-40 -minute destination briefings, delivered prior to each port call, that turn a day ashore from a hopeful wander into a confident expedition. In a crisp, enthralling briefing style, each edition reads the day like a chart - the timings, the lie of the land, the unmissable sights, and the candid local knowledge no guidebook offers, from what a coffee really costs to the one thing best left unsaid. Researched afresh for every destination, linked to offered shore excursions as necessary, and supplied with a shareable map of every place it names, Simon Hardern aims to send guests down the gangway informed, oriented and quietly thrilled - and the format travels to any port on the ship's itinerary. Ports currently covered: Ålesund, Belfast, Bergen, Cape Town, Casablanca, Copenhagen, Dun Laoghaire, Dunmore East, Funchal, Gdansk, Geiranger, Greenock, Helsinki, Honningsvåg, Invergordon, Klaipeda, Las Palmas, Lerwick, Liverpool, Molde, Montevideo, Olden, Phuket, Port Louis, Port Stanley, Puerto Madryn, Punta Arenas, Punta del Este, Richards Bay, Riga, Rio de Janeiro, Saaremaa, Salvador, Santa Cruz de Tenerife, Stavanger, Tallinn, Tangier, Tromsø, Trondheim and Ushuaia. That's 40 ports in all - spanning the Baltic and Scandinavia, the British Isles, the Atlantic islands and North Africa, South America and the South Atlantic, southern Africa, the Indian Ocean and Southeast Asia.

Africa (5):

Title: GATEWAY TO CONTINENTS - THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF SOUTHERN AFRICA
Summary: In this talk, Simon Hardern explores why Southern Africa has held extraordinary strategic importance for centuries, controlling one of the world's most vital maritime crossroads. The speaker examines how the Cape Sea Route shaped global trade, naval power, and European exploration long before the Suez Canal existed. Guests learn how the region's geography, winds and currents influenced navigation, why Cape Town became a critical victualling and military hub, and how modern shipping still relies on these waters today. The talk also highlights mineral wealth, choke points, and emerging geopolitical dynamics. It's an accessible, visually rich session with strong appeal for history-minded cruise guests.

Title: THE CAPE OF GOOD HOPE - GATEWAY TO ADVENTURE AND HISTORY
Summary: A pivotal landmark during the Age of Exploration, this iconic site symbolises both hope and peril for early sailors. Renowned for its notorious weather - shaped by the dramatic interplay of ocean currents, powerful winds, and rugged geography - it vividly embodies why it earned the nickname 'Cape of Storms.' Simon Hardern will provide tales of shipwrecks to bring to life the human drama of navigating its treacherous waters. Beyond its formidable history, the Cape showcases stunning biodiversity, from its unique fynbos vegetation to its charismatic wildlife, leaving audiences captivated by the awe-inspiring wonder of this legendary destination.

Title: THE WAR AT SEA OFF SOUTHERN AFRICA – WW1 AND WW2
Summary: The waters surrounding the southern tip of Africa, dominated by the Cape of Good Hope, have historically been of immense strategic importance. This region served as a vital maritime crossroads for trade routes connecting Europe, Asia, and the Americas. During both World Wars, the seas off southern Africa became theatres of intense naval activity, characterised by convoy battles, submarine warfare and the strategic deployment of naval bases. These conflicts underscored the region's significance as both a chokepoint for global shipping and a critical supply line. Simon Hardern covers these issues in this presentation.

Title: ANGOLA - COASTLINES, CULTURE AND COMEBACKS
Summary: This talk introduces guests to Angola, one of Africa's most intriguing and least understood nations. Simon Hardern explores Angola's dramatic Atlantic coastline, rich cultural traditions and globally influential music, before examining the country's vast natural resources - especially oil and diamonds - that shape its modern economy. The session explains Angola's complex colonial history, its long civil war and its remarkable transformation since 2002 as Luanda emerges as a rapidly growing capital. Guests also gain insight into Angola's wildlife, national parks and unique blend of African and Portuguese heritage. It's an accessible, balanced and highly informative introduction for travellers visiting the region.

Title: NAMIBIA - DESERTS, DIAMONDS AND THE SKELETON COAST
Summary: This talk presents an engaging introduction to Namibia, one of Africa's most striking and diverse destinations. Simon Hardern explores the vast Namib Desert - the world's oldest - along with the towering dunes of Sossusvlei, the wildlife-rich Etosha plains and the haunting shipwrecks of the Skeleton Coast. He also examines Namibia's diamond and mineral wealth, its unique German colonial legacy and the cultural heritage of peoples such as the Himba and Herero. Guests also learn how Namibia became a pioneer in community-based conservation. Visually rich and easy to follow, it offers travellers an excellent foundation for understanding this remarkable Atlantic nation.

Antarctica (4):

Title: ANTARCTICA AND THE CRUISE SHIP CONUNDRUM - WONDERS AND WORRIES
Summary: Cruise ships in the Antarctic - sounds like an adventure, right? More people are getting the chance to experience the frozen beauty of this remote continent, but it's not all snowflakes and scenic vistas. Simon Hardern dives into the rising concerns about how this surge in cruise traffic could harm the delicate ecosystem - pollution, wildlife disruption, and even the dreaded risk of oil spills. Join him as he navigates the challenges and efforts being made by the international community to keep Antarctica pristine for future generations.

Title: WHERE OCEANS MEET - EXPLORING THE SOUTHERN STRAITS AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD
Summary: Simon Hardern explore three of the most dramatic waterways on Earth - the Strait of Magellan, the Beagle Channel and the Drake Passage. These have shaped 500 years of exploration, from Magellan and Drake to Darwin aboard HMS BEAGLE. They remain vital gateways for global trade, rich wildlife habitats and key routes for Antarctic travel. You'll discover their fierce winds, complex navigation, indigenous history and pivotal role in climate science. As he follows in the wake of great explorers, he will let you experience these legendary waters in comfort - yet still with a sense of wonder and respect.

Title: SHACKLETON'S ENDURANCE - THE ANTARCTIC CRUISE THAT REALLY WENT SOUTH!
Summary: Imagine booking a cruise where the ice doesn't chill your drink but it eats your ship. Sir Ernest Shackleton and 27 very cold friends spent two years proving that teamwork, optimism and an alarming fondness for penguin stew can conquer almost anything (except the Weddell Sea). They drifted, rowed and climbed their way into history - with zero Wi-Fi, one heroic carpenter, and a cat named Mrs Chippy who turned out to be a bloke. It's the ultimate tale of grit, leadership under pressure and never, ever buying the 'adventure package.' Join Simon Hardern for this amazing tale.

Title: ANTARCTIC BASES - SCIENCE, SURVIVAL, AND THE SPIRIT OF EXPLORATION
Summary: The Antarctic Peninsula is one of the most extraordinary places on Earth - a frozen frontier where human curiosity, courage and cooperation thrive. Here, scientists from over 20 nations work side-by-side in extreme conditions to unlock secrets of climate, oceans, wildlife, and our planet's future. These remote bases are more than research stations; they are symbols of resilience, ingenuity and global unity. From pioneering discoveries to remarkable human stories, this is science at the edge of the world. Join Simon Hardern as he reveals the hidden world behind the buildings you may see (or not), and why what happens here matters to us all.

Asia (13):

Title: CAPITALS OF JAPAN THROUGH HISTORY - FROM WANDERING COURTS TO MEGACITY
Summary: Join Simon Hardern on a journey through Japan's remarkable parade of capitals. Before Tokyo, the imperial court moved whenever an emperor died - death being spiritually polluting in Shinto belief. Nara lasted 74 years before Buddhist monks grew dangerously powerful. Kyoto endured for an extraordinary 1,074 years, surviving shoguns, civil war and repeated burning before being quietly replaced in 1868. Edo became the world's largest city almost by accident. Tokyo reigns today - though events could always lead Japan to make that decision one more time.

Title: JAPAN'S AUTOMOTIVE REVOLUTION
Summary: In the wreckage of post-war Japan, a few determined engineers turned scarcity into strategy - and built an empire on efficiency. From Toyota's Just-in-Time genius to Honda's motorcycle-to-motorcar leap, Japan transformed "cheap and cheerful" into 'crafted and reliable.' Kaizen replaced chaos; perfection became a process. By the 1980s, Japan wasn't just building cars - it was teaching the world how to build anything properly. From rusty factories rose Lexus luxury, Prius hybrids, and a philosophy that made every worker a quality guru. It's not just manufacturing - it's a masterclass in turning limits into legends.

Title: THE SOUTH KOREAN SUCCESS STORY
Summary: Imagine a country flattened by war, poorer than most of Africa in the 1950s, now selling you your smartphone, TV and favourite Netflix binge. That's South Korea - the 'Miracle on the Han River.' Guided by vision, discipline, and perhaps an industrial-strength work ethic, it morphed from rice paddies to microchips, dictatorships to democracy, and now leads the world in tech, pop culture, and skincare. BTS, Hyundai, and Samsung didn't just happen - they were planned. Join Simon Hardern as traces how kimchi met capitalism and created a cultural and economic powerhouse unlike any other.

Title: DRAGONS, DATA AND DESTINY - HOW CHINA IS RESHAPING OUR WORLD
Summary: Step into the story of modern China, a nation rising at breathtaking speed and reshaping the 21st-century world. From high-speed trains and lunar missions to AI breakthroughs, megacities, clean-energy revolutions and the complex dance of cooperation and rivalry with the United States, this presentation reveals the forces driving today's global transformation. Simon Hardern explores astonishing engineering feats, remarkable scientific achievements, and the strategic ambitions powering China's future. Whether you're curious, cautious or simply fascinated, this presentation offers a compelling, accessible journey behind the headlines; discover how China's rise is changing the world we all share.

Title: FREEDOM OF NAVIGATION IN THE SOUTH CHINA SEA
Summary: The South China Sea is like the world's most valuable - and contested - traffic jam, where strategic location meets vast oil and gas riches. The concept of 'Freedom of Navigation' is at the heart of the tension between China and the USA, governed by international law, but often easier said than followed. Simon Hardern takes you through the high-stakes disputes, shedding light on what's at play in these waters and why what happens here could ripple across the globe. Spoiler: It's not just about sailing smoothly.

Title: US AND CHINESE NAVIES - FIRST AMONGST EQUALS
Summary: The US Navy and the Chinese Navy - two naval behemoths, each vying for dominance of the seas. While the US Navy has long been the top dog, China has been making waves (literally) with a rapid fleet expansion and modernization over the last two decades. Simon Hardern dives into the fascinating world of these naval titans, comparing their strengths, strategies, and what this rivalry means for global maritime power. Think of it as a naval showdown - no missiles or torpedoes involved, just strategy and ships!

Title: THE NORTH KOREAN MISSILE THREAT – A GROWING ISSUE ON THE HORIZON
Summary: North Korea's ballistic missile programme isn't just a headline - it's a ticking time bomb that's been growing steadily for over two decades. For democratic nations like South Korea, Japan, and the US, the threat is as real as it is worrying. Simon Hardern walks you through the key issues behind North Korea's missile ambitions, its defiant stance on denuclearisation, and why this is more than just a regional concern. Spoiler: It's not just about rockets; it's about global stability.

Title: INDIA - THE NEXT SUPERPOWER?
Summary: With its booming economy, massive population, strategic location, and rich cultural influence, India is often seen as a rising contender for global superpower status. But can it overcome the challenges standing in its way? Simon Hardern takes you through the key factors that could propel India to the top, and the hurdles it must clear to get there. It's a story of potential, power, and the road ahead - because when it comes to India, the future could be as vast as its population!

Title: RESPONDING TO THE 2004 BOXING DAY INDIAN OCEAN TSUNAMI
Summary: Following 9.1 magnitude earthquake 18 miles below the ocean floor between the Burma and Indian Plates on Boxing Day 2004, the resulting massive tsunami caused waves up to 30 m (100 ft) high. It devastated communities along the surrounding coasts of the Indian Ocean, killing an estimated 227,898 people in 14 countries in one of the deadliest natural disasters in recorded history. In this fascinating presentation, Simon Hardern recounts the scope of the disaster response and the significant challenges rescuers faced with the incident response given the overwhelming number of deceased personnel as well as the critical lessons learned.

Title: INDONESIA - ISLANDS OF FIRE, SPICE AND GLOBAL SEAFARING HISTORY
Summary: This talk presents Indonesia as one of the world's most remarkable archipelagos, stretching across 17,000 islands and multiple cultures. Simon Hardern examines Indonesia's volcanic Ring of Fire, its legendary spice-trade heritage and its powerful influence on global exploration. Guests learn about Bali's cultural traditions, Java's ancient temples, the biodiversity of Komodo and the deep maritime connections that shaped the nation's history. The talk also highlights Indonesia's modern growth, its linguistic and ethnic diversity and the continuing importance of its islands to regional trade. The session offers guests a rich, colourful and accessible introduction to this extraordinary nation.

Title: MALAYSIA - CROSSROADS OF CULTURES, RAINFORESTS AND RISING CITIES
Summary: This talk introduces guests to Malaysia as one of Southeast Asia's most vibrant cultural crossroads. Simon Hardern explores how Malay, Chinese, Indian and Indigenous traditions have shaped the country's cuisine, religion and festivals, creating a uniquely diverse national identity. The session highlights Malaysia's spectacular rainforests, wildlife-rich national parks, and the dramatic landscapes of Borneo. It also covers the growth of Kuala Lumpur as a modern Asian hub and Malaysia's historic maritime role in the Strait of Malacca. Engaging and visually rich, the talk gives travellers a clear and accessible foundation before exploring this dynamic and welcoming nation.

Title: MALACCA - THE NARROW STRAIT THAT SHAPES THE WORLD
Summary: In this talk, Simon Hardern takes you on a fast-moving voyage through the Strait of Malacca – a 550-mile bottleneck that quietly keeps the modern world running. A quarter of global trade squeezes through this narrow passage between Malaysia and Sumatra, feeding the economies of East Asia and powering global supply chains. Simon Hardern explores its colourful past of sultans, traders, and pirates, and the modern challenges of crowded waters, monsoons, and environmental strain. With Singapore as its powerhouse guardian, the Strait remains indispensable. Simon also looks ahead to autonomous ships, cyber risks and climate pressures shaping its future.

Title: SRI LANKA - CROSSROADS OF TRADE, TEMPLES AND TEA
Summary: This talk explores Sri Lanka's unique blend of ancient civilisation, colonial history and stunning natural beauty. Simon Hardern traces the island's role in the Indian Ocean trade networks that brought merchants, spices and religions from across Asia. Guests discover the cultural treasures of Anuradhapura and Kandy, the wildlife of Yala and Udawalawe and the tea-growing highlands shaped by British influence. The talk also reflects on Sri Lanka's more recent history, recovery and modern identity. With strong appeal for travellers, the session highlights the island's warmth, resilience and extraordinary heritage, offering an ideal introduction before visiting this enchanting destination.

Caribbean/Central America (7):

Title: THE BERMUDA TRIANGLE - MYTH VERSUS REALITY
Summary: Join Simon Hardern as he sails straight into the Bermuda Triangle - because what could possibly go wrong? We'll trace how a perfectly ordinary patch of ocean became the world's most notorious vortex of vanishing ships, confused pilots and over-excited authors. From Columbus spotting weird lights to Flight 19 disappearing faster than your phone signal at sea, we'll separate the spooky from the scientific. Was it aliens, Atlantis, or just bad navigation and even worse weather? Expect mysterious tales, dubious theories, and a few compass jokes. By the end, you'll either be a believer, a sceptic or simply grateful our cruise ship has GPS and a very competent captain!

Title: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE CARIBBEAN REGION TO THE WORLD - MORE THAN JUST SUN AND SAND
Summary: The Caribbean is often seen as the ultimate vacation spot, but its strategic importance goes way beyond beach resorts. With its prime location, economic resources, cultural influence, and political stability, the Caribbean is a key player on the global stage. Simon Hardern takes you through the reasons why this region is so much more than just a cruise destination - because there's a lot more to these islands than meets the eye (or the travel brochure)!

Title: THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN CENTRAL AMERICA - HOPE FOR THE FUTURE
Summary: Central America is anything but predictable - politically, economically, and socially. From democracies to authoritarian regimes, this region is a complex mix of challenges and opportunities. Simon Hardern provides an insightful overview of the dynamic political landscape, offering a closer look at the unique situations each country faces. It's a whirlwind tour of the region, where every twist and turn presents new hurdles and possibilities.

Title: THE CARIBBEAN SEA - A HOTSPOT FOR DRUG TRAFFICKING
Summary: The Caribbean Sea might be known for its turquoise waters, but it's also a key route for drug traffickers moving illicit substances from South America to North America and Europe. With its strategic location, this maritime highway sees more than just cruise ships—it's a bustling pathway for cocaine, marijuana, and other drugs. Simon Hardern will dive into the key trends, recent statistics, and some of the more jaw-dropping stories from this high-stakes game on the waves.

Title: HER MAJESTY'S YACHT BRITANNIA - GUARDING THE QUEEN IN STYLE (IN THE CARIBBEAN)
Summary: When Her Majesty's Yacht Britannia sailed the seas, it wasn't just a luxury cruise - it had a Royal Navy Guardship keeping watch, ensuring security, offering support, and performing ceremonial duties. With his firsthand experience in the Caribbean, Simon Hardern shares behind-the-scenes stories of life aboard the Guardship, mixing high-stakes security with a touch of humour. It's a royal adventure with a side of naval tales you won't hear at Buckingham Palace!

Title: HURRICANE DISASTER RESPONSE – BEYOND THE STORM
Summary: With climate change fuelling stronger, more frequent hurricanes in the Caribbean, the aftermath of these powerful storms is a race against time. When disaster strikes, it's not just about getting aid to those in need - it's about coordination between military, civilian agencies, and the local community to manage immediate relief and ensure long-term recovery. Simon Hardern shares his firsthand experience in hurricane disaster response,

giving you a unique perspective on the challenges and triumphs that come after the storm. It's more than just rebuilding - it's about resilience.

Title: HOW YOU PILOT A SHIP THROUGH THE PANAMA CANAL - NAVIGATING GLOBAL TRADE, ONE LOCK AT A TIME
Summary: The Panama Canal isn't just a shortcut - it's the lifeblood of global trade, with 6% of all world commerce passing through it each year. Ships save a whopping 8,000 nautical miles by avoiding the long trek around Cape Horn. But behind this engineering marvel is a team of over 300 skilled pilots, each guiding massive vessels through its locks and lakes. Simon Hardern takes you behind the scenes to explain what it takes to become one of these expert pilots, a journey that can take up to 12 years of intense training. It's not just about steering ships - it's about mastering one of the world's most crucial maritime routes!

Europe (Including Arctic And Baltic)(9):

Title: THE ARCTIC REGION - GEOPOLITICS, STRATEGY AND CHALLENGES
Summary: The Arctic isn't just ice and polar bears- it's the world's chilliest power struggle. Beneath the snow lie oil, gas, minerals, and fish that everyone wants. Russia, owning over half the coastline, flexes with icebreakers and military bases, while Canada insists the Northwest Passage is theirs (the US politely disagrees). Melting ice opens shipping routes that cut travel times by 40%, sparking NATO drills, EU policies and a Russia-China partnership. Indigenous voices remind everyone sustainability matters. The future? Simon Hardern will cover cooperation, competition and conflict. Think of it as Game of Thrones, but with more icebergs and fewer dragons.

Title: HUNTING RUSSIAN SUBMARINES IN THE GREENLAND-ICELAND-FAROES-UK GAP
Summary: The Greenland-Iceland-Faroes-UK gap- where Soviet submarines once played cat-and-mouse with NATO forces - is the ultimate maritime game board. As an Anti-Submarine Warfare Officer, Simon Hardern dives into the high-stakes drama of Cold War submarine tracking and how these efforts protected vital Atlantic shipping lanes. He'll also reveal how this strategic chokepoint remains just as critical today. Think sonar pings, stealthy subs, and a dash of oceanic intrigue - all served with Simon's insider perspective!

Title: WAR IN THE FJORDS – NORWAY - THE COLDEST NAVAL BATTLEFIELD OF WORLD WAR 2
Summary: This presentation explores the dramatic 1940 German invasion of Norway and the brutal naval and Arctic campaign that followed. Set against Norway's vast, strategically vital coastline, the presentation explains why geography, Swedish iron ore, and control of the North Atlantic made Norway indispensable to both sides. It recounts Narvik, the sinking of Blücher, the defiance of King Haakon, the Arctic convoy battles, and the relentless hunt for Scharnhorst and Tirpitz. Simon Hardern closes this by linking wartime strategy to modern Norway's pivotal role in NATO's northern flank and European energy security.

Title: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF ICELAND
Summary: Perched at the crossroads of icy maritime chokepoints, Iceland has been a linchpin of Western security since WWII. Simon Hardern explores how this military-free NATO founding member plays a vital role in safeguarding Europe, from blocking Soviet advances back then to countering Russia's resurgent Arctic ambitions today. With its strategic position and access to Arctic riches, Iceland proves that even without an army, it's a heavyweight in the security game - ignore it at your peril.

Title: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE BALTIC REGION
Summary: The Baltic region holds a pivotal position in European and global security frameworks, serving as a key geographical and strategic area for NATO's Collective Defence posture. Its significance is underscored by its location, resources, and role in fostering unity among member states while countering emerging threats. Furthermore, the contributions of Nordic nations to NATO amplify its capacity to secure the region and maintain stability across Europe. Simon Hardern will talk through these issues based on his significant NATO background.

Title: INTRIGUE IN THE BALTIC SEA - SAFEGUARDING THE LIFELINES OF MODERN CIVILISATION
Summary: Beneath the Baltic Sea lies a web of pipelines and cables quietly powering our world and streaming your favourite shows. But these vital lifelines face threats from accidents, natural disasters, and not-so-friendly actors. Join Simon Hardern as he dives (metaphorically, of course) into the fascinating, interconnected world of underwater infrastructure, exploring why protecting these invisible lifelines is vital to ensuring our global resilience. It's not just about energy and the internet; it's about keeping civilisation afloat - literally!

Title: KALININGRAD - THE RUSSIAN ENCLAVE IN THE HEART OF EUROPE
Summary: Kaliningrad and the Suwalki Gap may look like mere blips on the map, but their geopolitical importance packs a serious punch. With his extensive NATO experience, Simon Hardern takes you on a journey through their fascinating history, strategic roles, and why these little spots are a big deal in global affairs. Think of it as a crash course in how small corners of the world can create giant ripples - without the need for a geography degree!

Title: THE BEAST OF BISCAY - WEATHER, WAVES AND MARITIME MYTHS
Summary: This talk explores the dramatic reputation of the Bay of Biscay, long feared by sailors for its violent storms, towering swells and unpredictable weather. Simon Hardern examines why this area produces some of Europe's roughest seas, shaped by deep submarine canyons, Atlantic depressions and the collision of warm and cold currents. Guests will hear stories of shipwrecks, rescues and the challenges faced by explorers and merchant sailors navigating these waters. The session also highlights Biscay's rich marine life and its cultural importance to France and the Basque Country.

Title: THE STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE OF THE MEDITERRANEAN
Summary: This presentation explores the Mediterranean's strategic importance as a bridge between Europe, Africa, and the Middle East. It highlights how trade routes, narrow sea passages, migration, and naval power have shaped history and still influence global security today. By linking each port to wider political, economic, and cultural forces, Simon Hardern offers cruise passengers a deeper understanding of this remarkable and contested sea.

Pacific (7)

Title: THE PACIFIC HIGHWAYS - HOW WINDS, CURRENTS AND ISLANDS SHAPED HUMAN EXPLORATION
Summary: This talk reveals how the Pacific Ocean's great wind systems, currents and island chains formed the natural highways that guided human movement for thousands of years. Simon Hardern explores how Polynesian navigators mastered these routes using stars, swells and bird patterns long before European arrival and how explorers like Cook, Torres and Vancouver later relied on the same ocean pathways. The session explains El Niño, the trade winds and the powerful gyres that still influence modern shipping today. Rich in geography,

exploration history and maritime insight, this is an accessible and visually engaging talk ideal for curious cruise guest.

Title: CAPTAIN COOK'S PACIFIC ODYSSEY - ADVENTURE AT THE EDGE OF THE WORLD
Summary: Join Simon Hardern for a journey in the wake of Captain James Cook, the Royal Navy navigator who pushed the boundaries of the known world. We'll visit the islands he charted, the peoples he met, and the scientific breakthroughs he helped ignite. From observing a Venus transit in Tahiti to exploring Australia's Great Barrier Reef (and famously getting stuck on it), Cook's Pacific adventures were filled with triumphs, danger and remarkable discovery. This talk blends exploration, human stories and cultural encounters, giving guests a vivid picture of life aboard an 18th century expedition. It's an engaging look at how Cook's voyages changed maps, science, and history forever.

Title: CROSSING TOMORROW - THE REMARKABLE STORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL DATE LINE
Summary: This talk offers guests a clear, engaging and often surprising look at the International Date Line - the invisible boundary where yesterday and tomorrow meet. Presented with humour and strong maritime relevance, it explores how the line was created, why it zig-zags across the Pacific, and how nations have shifted time for political and economic advantage. Simon Hardern also explains how early navigators, including Cook and Magellan, discovered the oddities of global timekeeping, and how cruise ships manage date changes today. It's an accessible, entertaining session that consistently sparks passenger curiosity and lively discussion.

Title: THE BERING STRAIT IN THE 21ST CENTURY - ARCTIC AMBITIONS
Summary: This talk explores the Bering Strait and Aleutian Islands as one of the world's most remarkable maritime crossroads. Simon Hardern covers the region's unique geography - where Asia and North America almost touch - and explains how shifting ice, fog and storms shaped Indigenous migration, Russian and European exploration, and the establishment of Cold War frontiers. It covers the Aleutian Campaign of WWII, the Great Circle routes that make these waters vital for modern aviation and shipping, and the ecological richness of this volcanic chain. It's a compelling blend of history, geopolitics and natural drama, ideal for curious cruise audiences.

Title: THE FIVE EYES SECURITY ALLIANCE - THE MOST ENDURING SECURITY ALLIANCE YOU MAY NEVER HAVE HEARD OF
Summary: The Five Eyes alliance is the ultimate intelligence team-up, bringing together the US, UK, Canada, Australia, and New Zealand in a historic post-WW2 partnership. Often hailed as one of the most powerful and enduring intelligence-sharing agreements, it's been a key player in counterterrorism and global security. Simon Hardern takes you on a deep dive into the fascinating history and impact of this secretive alliance, shedding light on how these five countries work together to protect the West – because, sometimes, sharing is very much in everyone's interest.

Title: THE LEGACY AND FUTURE HYDROGRAPHIC SERVICE OF THE CHILEAN NAVY
Summary: In 2024, the Chilean Hydrographic Office marked a remarkable milestone - its 150th anniversary! Founded in 1874, it's not just the oldest hydrographic institution in South America, but also one of the most storied on the global stage. For a century and a half, this venerable institution has been the unsung hero of maritime safety and trade, steering through the rough seas of technological innovation and ever-shifting geopolitical currents. Simon Hardern takes us on a fascinating journey through its rich history, shedding light on how this

maritime powerhouse is all set to keep guiding explorers and traders alike, ensuring smooth sailing for the next 150 years!

Title: THE CHILEAN TSUNAMI WARNING SYSTEM – SUPERHERO OF THE PACIFIC
Summary: Chile's tsunami warning system is like the superhero of the Pacific, always on high alert thanks to its position smack dab on the volatile Pacific Ring of Fire. Armed with cutting-edge seismic monitors, real-time ocean data, and advanced modelling tools, this system doesn't just predict tsunamis - it practically calls them out before they arrive. Simon Hardern vividly explains how Chile's system is not just a national safety net but also a vital part of the Pan-Pacific warning team. And as he cheekily points out, if a tsunami does hit, being on a ship near Chile might just be one of the smartest places to ride out the wave!

UK and Ireland (6)

Title: RULER OF THE WAVES - HOW BRITAIN BUILT, HELD AND LOST MARITIME SUPREMACY
Summary: For nearly a century and a half, Britain ruled the world from the sea. This talk explores how an island nation transformed naval power into global influence - defeating rivals, securing trade and sustaining an empire through command of the oceans. From Trafalgar to the Battle of the Atlantic, Simon Hardern examines the innovation, strategy and hard-won success, alongside moments of vulnerability and costly overreach. Finally, he traces why victory in two world wars did not prevent decline, as economic strain, new technologies and rising superpowers reshaped maritime power after 1945.

Title: THE SHETLAND BUS - FISHERMEN, SPIES AND A SECRET WARTIME LIFELINE FOR NORWAY
Summary: In the depths of the Second World War, ordinary Norwegian fishermen slipped out of Shetland under cover of darkness, running one of the most daring secret operations of the entire conflict. Disguised as humble fishing boats, they carried spies, weapons and wireless sets into Nazi-occupied Norway, and brought resistance fighters and refugees back to freedom across two hundred miles of the world's most unforgiving sea. Some never returned. One village paid a devastating price for helping them. Simon Hardern tells the story of the Shetland Bus, told through the men who ran it, the coast that hid them, and the friendship it forged that still stands in stone today.

Title: THE SINKING OF HMS ROYAL OAK AT SCAPA FLOW - THE FIRST GREAT BRITISH NAVAL DISASTER OF WORLD WAR 2
Summary: In October 1939, the British battleship HMS ROYAL OAK was sunk at the Royal Navy's Home Fleet (supposedly) fortress anchorage of Scapa Flow in Orkney by a torpedo attack from the German submarine U-47. Over 800 sailors lost their life when the ship sunk; it had a considerable effect on British wartime morale just two months into the start of World War 2. Simon Hardern will recount the story of this audacious attack and how, even today, each year the Royal Navy commemorates the fate of those who died in the service of their nation.

Title: THE VOYAGE OF THE DAMNED - FROM DOGGER BANK TO TSUSHIMA - 1904-1905
Summary: Join Simon Hardern for this gripping retelling of one of naval history's most extraordinary odysseys. Follow Russia's ill-fated Baltic Fleet on its epic 18,000-mile voyage to the Far East - plagued by paranoia, blunders and tragedy. From the farcical Dogger Bank incident in the North Sea to the devastating Battle of Tsushima Straits against the Japanese Imperial Fleet, discover how pride, poor leadership and endurance shaped this 'voyage of

the damned.' A true story of ambition, folly, and transformation at sea that would change the balance of power in Asia - and the course of naval warfare - forever.

Title: WRECKS, RUIN AND REMARKABLE TALES - 200 YEARS OF MARITIME DRAMA AROUND BRITAIN AND IRELAND

Summary: For centuries, the waters around the UK and Ireland have swallowed great ships, small boats, naval giants and unsuspecting steamers - each leaving behind a story more gripping than the last. In this presentation, Simon Hardern dives into the most fascinating of these wrecks: dramatic sinkings, heroic rescues, wartime mysteries, engineering marvels lost to the sea and vessels that simply vanished without explanation. From treacherous reefs to wartime minefields, we explore how these ships met their fate and what divers and historians have uncovered since. It's a journey through storm, steel, tragedy and triumph - where every wreck has a tale worth telling.

Title: ANCHORS OF EMPIRE - A TOUR THROUGH BRITAIN'S HISTORIC ROYAL NAVAL BASES, DOCKYARDS AND ANCHORAGES

Summary: From the windswept anchorage of Scapa Flow to the deep-water berths of Devonport, Faslane, Invergordon, Londonderry, Portland, Portsmouth, Rosyth and many others, Britain's Royal Naval bases, harbours and anchorages have shaped global history for centuries. This presentation explores how each port became a strategic powerhouse - home to grand fleets, wartime plots, pioneering technology, and moments that changed the course of conflict. Simon Hardern will uncover tales of submarine hunts, Arctic convoys, secret trials, and the everyday life of sailors who served at these storied bases. As your cruise calls at several of these historic harbours, this is a chance to step into their past, understand their purpose and see them with new eyes.