One of the most enriching things about an Orient Lines cruise is the experts on board who draw from their vast knowledge to make past civilizations, monuments, and wildlife come alive. Our distinguished roster of speakers has, over the years, ranged from the New Zealander who conquered Mount Everest to Britain's former chief of defense intelligence. The insights they give on the worlds we visit go far beyond the average guidebook.

As you transit the Suez Canal, Egyptologists are on hand to unravel the mysteries of the pharaohs and cultures of the ancient dynasties. If you're cruising to the Orient, you might find Antiques Roadshow's Vincent Liddon and Hilary Kay, with their vast knowledge of antiques and porcelain, on board to guide your search for Eastern treasures. Orient Lines passengers have scoured the skies with Dr. Patrick Moore, the renowned astronomer, author, and creator of the BBC TV show The Sky at Night.

Our ships navigate majestic coasts. For example, as the Marco Polo navigates the fjordlands of Norway, Grim Drain, we'll be aboard to point out their natural beauty and regale us with colorful legends of the trolls. When we explore magnificent Milford Sound, naturalists from that country's Department of Conservation shed light on New Zealand's environmental leadership. And on our voyage through Polynesia, you'll receive updates from two men who "wrote the book" — or rather many books — on South Pacific politics: Nigel Roberts, a specialist in New Zealand and comparative politics, and Dr. Stephen Levine, a frequent guest on The Tonight Show, or exploring the Great Barrier Reef with coral authority Leo Zell, author of The Lonely Planet Diving and Snorkeling Guide to the Great Barrier Reef.

On the Marco Polo's Antarctic expeditions, a leader is Nigel Sowell, the internationally recognized naturalist who has won royal honors for his work in conservation, led more than 30 expeditions to Antarctica, and drafted the guidelines of conduct followed by all visitors to the White Continent.

Learn about Antarctica's wildlife from field zoologist Dr. Peter Carey, who has spent a lifetime studying polar creatures such as Adele penguins and south polar skuas. Peter Hillary, explorer son of the Mount Everest conqueror, follows in his father's footsteps as a lecturer for Orient Lines. Peter made international headlines in January 1999 when, with two other ski trekkers, he battled blizzards, frostbite, and illness to forge a new overland route to the South Pole. Peter and his father were the first father-and-son team to reach the summit of Mount Everest.

Other Antarctic expeditions have included Jackie Ronne, the first American woman to set foot on the White Continent. Her husband traveled to Antarctica with Admiral Richard Byrd, and her father-in-law discovered the South Pole on an expedition with Roald Amundsen. Guests have also thrilled at the tales of Bill Kerz, the U.S. Navy pilot who survived over two weeks on the ice after his plane crashed in Antarctica, and the British adventurer Geoff Soult, who made a 220-day, 4,000-mile trek across Antarctica's coldest point. Many of our guest lecturers have hailed from the fields of journalism, policy, and diplomacy. Such noted journalists as Bernard Kahl or Peter Arseni have briefed our passengers on the political scene. They have also learned about South American politics from U.S. diplomat Stephen Dach, who carried out the investigation that led to the positive identification of a notorious Nazi war criminal.

In addition to destination talks and informative lectures, on selected sailings, there are workshops. You can learn how to cook with the gusto of The Galloping Gourmet, Graham Kerr, star of the lighthearted TV cooking series and an expert on nutrition, healthful eating, and fun in the kitchen.

Past culinary authorities have included noted restaurateur and executive chef Lisa Hemenway, with 23 years of experience and an international reputation for her artistic presentations. While guest lecturers are featured on all cruises except Mediterranean and Greek Isles, some voyages also include cultural presentations. In New Zealand, for example, you might witness the tongue-wagging dance of Maori warriors. Bejeweled dancers come on board in Bali to perform the compelling legong dance. And a special cruise features a Festival of Jewish Music sung by one of the most famous cantors in the world. These, and other cultural events, combine to create an outstanding destination experience.