

FROM BANDA TO RAJA AMPAT




THIS TRIP BEGINS IN AMBON, CAPITAL OF THE MOLUCCAS. FROM THERE WE WILL VISIT THE BEST DIVE SITES OF NUSA LAUT BEFORE WE REACH THE HISTORICALLY IMPORTANT BANDA SPICE ISLANDS. HISTORICALLY STRATEGIC DUTCH COLONY, THE EUROPEAN POWERS HARD FOUGHT FOR IN THE 16TH AND 17TH CENTURIES. FASCINATING LAND EXCURSIONS TO THE OLD DUTCH FORT OR CLIMBING THE VOLCANOES GIVES A COMPLETE FEEL TO THIS TRIP. ALONG THE EAST COAST OF CERAM WE CONTINUE TOWARDS RAJA AMPAT. THE FANTASTIC LABYRINTH OF ISLANDS AROUND MISOOL IS INCREDIBLE AND HAS BEEN SCIENTIFICALLY PROVEN TO BE THE EPICENTER OF GLOBAL MARINE BIODIVERSITY. IN THE RAJA AMPAT MARINE PARK WE WILL SPEND MEMORABLE DAYS AND THE TRIP WILL FINISH IN SORONG, WEST PAPUA.

AMBON The diving around the island is great, the wreck in the bay is full of life, pilot whales sometimes come close to the pier, but without a doubt Laha offers the best diving and is an unforgettable experience. Laha could be compared with Lembeh, it is pure muck at its best: mimics, flamboyant cuttlefish, rhinopias, ribbon eels, Ambon scorpion fish, frog fish by the dozens, ghost pipe fish... you name it, it is all there. Photographers... get ready!

NUSA LAUT Only a few hours away from Ambon, Nusa Laut it is the best example of a village taking care of a reef. The reef is as it was hundreds of years ago. The locals have protected it and now it is an outstanding diving site. The hard corals on the slope are unbeatable, the sandy bottom in the middle offers shelter to sting rays of different sizes, sharks patrolling the depths (white tips and grey reefs), and also leopard sharks and hammerheads. Some resident dugong has been spotted here.

PULAU SOANGI A few miles sailing from Banda we arrive at Pulau Soangi. A nice wall that ends up in a ridge where encounters with pelagics (tunas, rainbow runners, barracudas, trevallies), are always a thrill, as is the presence of a number of hammerheads that we spot regularly. The wall itself is worth the dive, huge barrel sponges, even bigger fans, soft corals on the wall and hard ones in the best conditions.



REEF BASICS 	
Diving season	From March to April and from October to December. The months of March and April, and mid/late-September to early/mid-December are the best times for diving in the Banda Sea, based upon surface conditions.
Rainy season	From January to February and from June to August.
Water temperature	27-32°C
Visibility	10-40m.
Depth	10-45m.
Currents	Usually gently but can be strong.
Surface conditions	Calm.
Experience level	Beginner-intermediate-advanced
Dive sites	>60.
Length of stay	Recommended 10-14 days on liveaboard cruise

TRIP ADVISOR →	
Airport	Arrival Airport Ambon. Departure Airport Sorong. International flights reach Bali, Jakarta or Manado then domestic flight to Ambon (overnight in Makassar from Bali or Manado flight). Return from Sorong to Manado, Bali or Jakarta and then connecting to international flight.
Weather	27-32 degrees. Indonesia has two seasons: wet and dry. In most of Indonesia the wet season is from October to April and the dry from May to September. West Papua dry season October to April, wet season is from May to September.

BANDA ISLANDS Banda has an important place in Indonesian and world history. Dominated by a 2.500ft active volcano, for more than three hundred years these tiny islands were the centre of wealth for the Dutch colonies. They were the only source of the rare spices of nutmeg and mace for centuries and the Dutch, after capturing them from the Portuguese, guarded them jealously from all comers including the English. For centuries, a kilo of these spices held more value than the same weight in gold. The old fort, the governor's house, the church, nutmeg plantations, are well worth visit and bring us back to colonial era.

Let's not forget the diving, both Pulau Run and Pulau Ai have pristine clear waters, lovely walls and good fish life, we might go a bit deeper in search of more hammerheads, big fish can be seen here as well, napoleons, schools of black snappers, bumpheads, etc. The outer reefs of Bandaneira are full of marine fauna of all colors and shapes. Schooling fish gather and the macro life is rich. A really unique area is the dive under the pier of Bandaneira. The size of the mandarin fish is just out of this world and if you are looking for other critters as cockatoo wasp fish, flying gurnards, frog fish, juvenile barramundis, juvenile emperor angle fish, juvenile sweetlip... this is the place.

A bit south is Hatta, consisting of an underwater coral garden with a friendly school of bumpheads and some white tips among its highlights.

Those who are fit and want to get up early, can climb the Volcano Gunung Api to watch the sunrise. Of course diving is our main focus and the dive site Lava Flow is not to be missed. Twenty 20 years ago Gunung Api erupted and the lava poured into the ocean and in the short time since a hard coral garden grew which is unrivalled in the world. Table corals over 5m width, staghorn corals as far as the eye can see and even endemic species found nowhere else is just a sample of what you can see here.



KOON This island is located in the South of Seram Island and is the next stop after our departure from Banda. The bad thing is Koon has only one dive site, the good one is that spot is named "Too Many Fish". What makes Koon so special is the location on a trench that goes down to over 3,000m. All the big sea life that passes from the north to the south ocean has to go through these waters. Big schools of all kinds of fish, trevally, batfish, snapper, grouper, pompano and barracuda are seen here. There's also the chance to see Orcas, whales and sharks. Depending on the moon phase the strong currents can make this dive very challenging.

MISOOL The Misool route will show you an abundance of the undersea world. Its beauty will carry you away! Thousands of isle, which have been pushed up throughout the thousands of years and build a wonderful scene. Everywhere you come across caves or caverns, you will find rocks as big as cathedrals, over hangs that all together improve the dramatic sight of these breathtaking landscapes. Of course these sights will continue in no less impressive views under water. Misool is one of the places on earth where you will find the most various species of fish, hard and soft corals, sponges, worms, nudibranchs, shrimps and crabs and all kind of non-vertebrates, like cuttlefish and octopus. You will as well come across Wobbegong shark and Epaulette sharks, which you will only find in the region of "Raja Ampat". Giant clams as well as fantastic tiny shells. Photographers as well as videographers will have the dives of their lifetime

KRI ISLAND When conditions are right, the nearby dive sites are nothing short of excellent. On dive sites like Sardine Reef, Cape Kri, and the aptly named Koteka, you will enjoy some of the very finest wide-angle photo opportunities you've ever seen. Beautiful hard coral bommies were host to dazzling soft corals and rainbow-colored crinoids with a foreground of oriental sweet lips or coral trout, a swirl of glassfish and anthias, and a background of schooling surgeonfish, jacks, and the occasional tuna. When the visibility is right, this can be an underwater photographer's heaven.

Contact us:

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OTHERS ACTIVITIES 其他	
Trekking:	To Carstenz Pyramid.
Diving:	WWII Wrecks of Manokwari.
Excursions:	Visiting Tanah Toraja and discovering Torajan people, the animist highlanders of Sulawesi, a distinct ethnic group with ancestral traditions.
	Visiting Baliem Valley highland of Irian Jaya, inhabited by the Dani Tribes and other sub tribes of Yali and Lani with their complex and primitive cultures, which looks more like "stone age" cultures.
-PLEASE INQUIRY FOR DETAILS IF INTERESTED- ✉	



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