

Best of Palau

Sample 7-nights or 10-nights itinerary for scuba diving 3-4 dives daily in the Rock Islands Southern Lagoon in the Republic of Palau

Arrival Airport: Koror (ROR)

Embarkation Port: Malakal Port

Departure Airport: Koror (ROR)

Disembarkation Port: Malakal Port

Summary

Palau is home to some of the best scuba diving sites in the world, and a 10-night liveaboard trip is the perfect way to experience them all. One must-see destination is Blue Corner, where strong currents attract an abundance of marine life, including sharks, barracudas, and schools of fish. Another popular site is German Channel, where manta rays can often be spotted. The Ulong Channel is another highlight, featuring a narrow passage between two islands with incredible coral formations and diverse marine life. The Chandelier Cave, with its unique underground chambers and air pockets, is also not to be missed. For those seeking a unique experience, Jellyfish Lake is home to thousands of harmless jellyfish that can be swum amongst. Palau truly has something for everyone, and a liveaboard trip is the perfect way to explore all of its breathtaking diving sites.

Recommendation on Diver's Qualifications

Please note that this itinerary will involve diving in currents. We recommend that our guests have:

- A minimum of 50 logged dives
- Nitrox certification
- Experience with diving in currents

Disclaimer

We wish to show you the best diving possible; however, a number of factors determine which route the Cruise Director and Captain will choose and which dive sites we visit. Weather conditions, tides, currents and the number of other dive vessels at a particular site all play a part in where the boat is heading to. While we attempt to ensure the number of dives we have scheduled is fulfilled, bad weather can hinder the yacht's ability to reach a specific dive site in our scheduled time. The safety of all on board is paramount and we always do our best to offer diving at alternative sites, should we be unable to visit the sites listed below.

A Typical Day

The diving day has a typical schedule as follows:

0600	Wake-up call
0630-0700	Hot beverages and light breakfast followed by a briefing and Dive 1
0830	Full breakfast , relaxation period
1030	Briefing and Dive 2
1230	Lunch, relaxation period
1430	Briefing and Dive 3
1600	Afternoon snacks and beverages, free and easy
1900	Dinner
OR	If we offer a sunset or night dive...
1830-1900	Dive 4 briefing
2030	Dinner and short briefing on next day's itinerary, free and easy

The following is a description of some of the dive sites we may visit during your liveaboard safari on board M/Y White Pearl.

Day 1

Pick up from your hotel at approximately 1500 PM. Board the liveaboard.

While you enjoy your welcome drink, we will give you a general boat briefing. After finishing all the paperwork, we will show you your home for the week. Just after dinner around 6PM, we give you a safety briefing. No diving the first day.

Day 2-3 Ulong Channel, Siaes Corner, Siaes Tunnel, Shark City

Sandy Bar

Sandy Bar is a dive site located on the western side of Palau's barrier reef. The site is a sloping coral garden that starts at around 5 meters/16 feet and gradually descends to a sandy bottom at around 25 meters/82 feet. The reef is mostly covered in hard corals such as staghorn, table, and brain corals. In between the corals, divers can find various reef fish such as blue tangs, triggerfish, and wrasses. The sandy bottom is home to garden eels, stingrays, and occasionally spotted eagle rays. The site is also known for its diverse macro life such as nudibranchs, flatworms, and shrimp. The current at this site is usually mild, making it a suitable dive for all experience levels.

Ulong Channel

This is considered one of the world's best adrenaline-fueled drift dives located on the west side of Ulong Island. This narrow 50-meter/164 feet wide channel is known for its seasonal spawning activity and gliding sharks, offering an unforgettable diving experience. With visibility of up to 30 meters/98 feet during incoming tides, you can enjoy beautiful coral gardens, schools of fish, and turtles. Stop at the channel's mouth to watch reef sharks and barracudas gliding past before drifting throughout the sandy bottom with coral formations and potentially more sharks. Keep an eye out for the picturesque lettuce coral garden surrounded by squirrel and soldier fish. Beware of aggressive Titan Trigger Fish near their nest and territory, especially between April and July when the channel is a spawning ground for thousands of marbled groupers.

Siaes Corner

Siaes Corner is a popular shark hangout where Grey Reef Sharks congregate alongside a variety of fish such as Jacks and barracuda during high tide. Large Hawksbill and Green Turtles can also be seen eating corals at the reef's edge, making for excellent photo opportunities. This spot provides a chance to capture stunning close-up shots of these magnificent creatures, as they appear too engrossed in their coral feast to notice divers nearby.

Siaes Tunnel

Siaes Tunnel is a unique site with a massive subaquatic cave featuring three openings that lead into its chamber from the reef wall's side. It offers a great opportunity for macro photography. The largest entrance starts at 28 meters/ 80 feet deep, with the cave's base beyond 140ft (45m). The vertical cliff descends to 65 meters / 200 feet and beyond into the vast ocean.

Shark City

Shark City is a finger-shaped dive site on Palau's western reef with slopes, vertical walls, and canyons dropping to meet the sandy run-off. The currents can be strong and unpredictable, with open ocean swells. Despite year-round rainfall, diving is possible in warm waters with temperatures ranging from 26-27C/79-81F. Shark City is home to numerous gray reef sharks and great hammerheads, as well as barracudas, snappers, butterflyfish, and unicornfish.

Day 4 German Channel

After lunch, head out for the first dive at German Channel. German Channel is a man-made shallow channel that connects the lagoon with the outer reef. The channel was blasted by the Germans in the early 1900s in order to transport the excavated phosphates from the island of Angaur to Koror port. This narrow pass separates Ngemelis and Ngercheu Islands, forming a connection between the inner lagoon and open sea. Today, many Manta Rays visit the channel and feed on the plankton that the strong currents bring in. The cleaning station is at 18 meters/59 feet and the beautiful coral garden at 7-13 meters. Other than manta rays, you may encounter Eagle Rays, Garden Eels, Snappers, Barracudas, Trevallies, Reef Sharks and many species of schooling fishes.

Day 5-6 Blue Corner, Blue Holes, New Drop Off, Big Drop Off

Start the day with an early morning dive at **Blue Corner**, a popular dive site with a strong current that attracts large pelagic species like sharks and rays. Blue Corner is the most famous dive site in Palau. The corner is a flat plateau, running a couple of hundred meters out to sea before dropping off abruptly. The wall is vertical and deep and is known for its abundance of underwater life.

There are large pelagic fishes, divers can expect to meet great numbers of Jacks, Big Eyes and Blue Fin Trevallies, Black Fin Barracudas, and Snappers. Also, divers are able to see Sharks, Tunas, wahoos, Groupers, Eagle Rays, Hump head Wrasses, Green Turtles, and Hawksbill Turtles! The coral life is also fantastic on this site – accompanied by Leafy Scorpionfish, Nudibranchs, Moray Eels, Lionfish, Boxing Crab, and Anemone Fish. It is the strong tidal currents that nourish the chain of life at Blue Corner, making it so special. It is recommended to have at least an advanced diving license to fully enjoy this beautiful site.

We will do at least 2 dives at Blue Corner over the next two days, because there is always something new to see and experience with each outgoing and incoming tide.

Blue Holes

Blue Holes on Ngemelis Island is a cavern dive site with shafts of sunlight illuminating the cave from overhead. It has multiple entrances and four big holes on the ceiling, allowing ambient light to penetrate the cave for great photo opportunities. The main cavern is appropriate for all levels, while the narrow cave at 26 meters/85 feet should only be explored by certified cave divers. The site's reef features colonies of boulder and cabbage corals scattered over the plateau at 18 meters/59 feet, and dropping over the wall reveals a healthy mix of hard and soft corals, sponges, and massive Gorgonian sea fans. Flaming Scallop, Leafy Scorpionfish, Dart Fish, Nudibranchs, and Cleaner Shrimps are some of the critters divers can find here.

Big Drop Off

Big Drop Off is a world-renowned wall dive, with a drop of almost 300 meters/984 feet. At the mooring buoy, a steel sphere and chain used in WWII can be seen. The vibrant rainbow of sponges and corals creates a stunning backdrop for the diverse marine life, including Sea Fans, Giant Black Corals, turtles, and various fish species such as Pyramid Butterflyfish and Moorish Idols. Sharks can also be spotted resting on the sandy bottom.

New Drop Off

New Drop Off, a dive site located in Ngemelis Island in Palau, is gaining popularity among divers and is often considered a smaller version of Blue Corner. While the island boasts other great dive sites like Turtle Wall, it is New Drop Off's unique plateau structure that attracts divers. Gray Reef sharks can be spotted near the west wall and the plateau area is home to schooling Blue Stripe Snappers, Black Snappers, Napoleon Wrasse, barracudas, and Emperor Angelfish who patrol the area.

After lunch, head out for a dive at New Drop Off, a wall dive with a strong current that attracts large pelagic species like sharks and rays.

Day 7-8 Peleliu (may be omitted for 8-day 7-night Best of Palau itinerary)

Peleliu is a small island located in the southern part of Palau. It is known for its historical significance, as well as its diverse and stunning dive sites. Here are some of the top dive sites around Peleliu:

Peleliu Wall

This dive site is located on the west side of Peleliu and is considered to be one of the best wall dives in Palau. The wall starts at around 20 meters/65 feet and drops down to more than 200 meters/656 feet. Divers can expect to see schools of fish, large pelagic species, and a wide variety of corals.

Orange Beach

This site is located on the eastern side of Peleliu and is known for its World War II artefacts, such as tanks and planes. The dive site has a sandy bottom and a reef that is home to a variety of marine life, including eagle rays, turtles, and reef sharks.

Peleliu Express

This dive site is located on the southern tip of Peleliu and is known for its strong currents. Divers can drift along the wall and see a variety of marine life, including sharks, rays, and schools of fish.

Peleliu Cut

This dive site is located on the northern side of Peleliu and features a cut in the reef that leads to a lagoon. Divers can see schools of fish, reef sharks, and other marine life.

West Wall

This site is located on the west side of Peleliu and is known for its stunning wall dive. Divers can see a variety of marine life, including sharks, turtles, and schools of fish.

Overall, Peleliu offers a diverse range of dive sites that are suitable for all levels of divers. The island's history, combined with its stunning underwater scenery, makes it a popular destination for divers visiting Palau.

Day 9-10 Wrecks, Short Drop off, and Chandelier Cave (may be omitted for 8-day 7-night Best of Palau itinerary)

The magnificence of Palau's immaculate coral gardens, drop-offs, and blue holes often overshadow the coral-encrusted WWII wrecks lying around Malakal Harbour. Several of these wrecks are just as remarkable as those found in Chuuk Lagoon.

Iro

Iro is a World War II Japanese Navy oil tanker that was sunk during Operation Desecrate One in 1944. The wreck is lying on its port side on a sandy bottom at a depth of 30 to 40 meters/98 to 131 feet.

The Iro is approximately 143 meters/469 feet long, with the hull and superstructure largely intact. Divers can swim through the cargo holds, engine rooms, and living quarters, exploring the wreckage up close. The site is known for its abundant marine life, with schools of fish, including snappers and jacks, frequently seen around the wreck. Barracudas, groupers, and lionfish are also common sightings, along with a variety of smaller critters like nudibranchs, flatworms, and shrimp. The site is recommended for experienced divers due to its depth and currents that can be present at times.

Jake's Seaplane

This seaplane is a unique dive site located in the lagoon of Palau. It gets its name from the World War II seaplane that sank in the area. The wreck of the plane is still largely intact and rests on a sandy bottom at a depth of about 15 meters/50 feet. The surrounding area is a mixture of coral gardens and sandy patches, making it an interesting spot for both wreck and reef diving. Divers can explore the interior of the seaplane, where they will find schools of glassfish and other small marine life. The exterior of the plane is also covered in a variety of corals and sponges, attracting a range of colorful reef fish. In addition to the seaplane, divers may also encounter turtles, rays, and reef sharks. The site is suitable for divers of all levels, with the seaplane accessible to even novice divers. The calm waters of the lagoon also make it an ideal location for snorkeling.

Chuyo Maru Wreck

The Chuyo Maru was a Japanese freighter bombed during WWII. One of the most popular wreck dives in Palau, she is nicknamed Lionfish Wreck given the number of lionfish that can be found there. It was sunk during the same air raid as the Helmet Wreck. This wreck lies in deeper water than the Helmet Wreck and is only suitable for advanced divers.

Short Drop Off

Short Drop Off dive site in Palau is located 8 miles east of Koror and offers a variety of diving experiences for novice to intermediate divers. The reef runs north to south and forms a deep plateau, with a range of corals and marine life including sharks, turtles, rays, and nudibranchs. The site is also home to the rare and ancient nautilus, which can be observed in depths exceeding 600 feet. With gentle currents, Short Drop Off is a great choice for all divers.

Chandelier Cave

Chandelier Cave is an exciting dive site with several chambers that can be entered at 8 meters/26 feet. Underwater tunnels allow for swimming between chambers and discovering beautiful air pockets. This site is great for wide-angle photography with crystalline formations hanging from the ceilings. However, divers should be prepared for an adventurous dive due to the overhead environment, which may result in zero visibility in some areas. Diving torches are required, and divers who are claustrophobic or uncomfortable with darkness should avoid this dive.

We will spend the night anchored in the Malakal Harbor area. The afternoon is free time for guests to dry their equipment, or have some fun with Stand Up Paddle boarding, kayaking or snorkelling.

Guests are required to ensure they have a minimum of 24 hours between their final dive and the scheduled time of departure of their flights out of Malakal.

Jellyfish Lake (Snorkeling)

On one of our cruise routes, we will take you to the highly anticipated Jellyfish Lake, a breathtaking natural wonder where you will be amazed by the remarkable adaptations of the Golden Jellyfish (*Mastigias papua etpisoni*) that evolved over millions of years to thrive in their isolated marine environment without any outlet to the ocean. Their unique features include a golden hue resulting from symbiotic algae in their bodies, enabling them to obtain food through photosynthesis and feeding on small planktonic organisms abundant in the lake. Unlike typical jellyfish, *Mastigias papua etpisoni* has no stinging cells, believed to be a result of the absence of natural predators in the lake that allowed them to evolve without such defenses. Further, these graceful creatures have developed the ability to vertically migrate within the lake to maximize their exposure to sunlight and algae, enhancing their chances of survival. Immerse yourself in the crystal-clear waters and snorkel alongside these fascinating jellyfish, creating a once-in-a-lifetime experience.

Day 11/Last Day: Departure

Wake up to breakfast on board at 0630-0700 AM.

Disembark the liveaboard around 0800 AM after breakfast and transfer to Koror International Airport/next hotel for your next destination.